With thanks to Mary Jo Duffy for her invaluable assistance and criticism.
—Chris Claremont

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MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVEL
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X-MEN®

GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS

by CHRISTOPHER CLAREMONT and BRENT ERIC ANDERSON

STAN LEE PRESENTS
A MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVEL

GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS

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WESTPORT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL -- WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT...
THEY RUN, WITHOUT KNOWING WHY, SAVE THAT THEY ARE IN PERIL OF THEIR LIVES.
THEIR NAMES ARE MARK AND JILL.
HE IS ELEVEN. SHE JUST TURNED NINE LAST WEEK.
I'M TIRED. CAN'T WE STOP 'N' REST? PLEASE?!
WE CAN'T, JILL. THEY'RE RIGHT BEHIND US!
THROUGH THE PLAYGROUND, SIS -- FAST AS YOU CAN!
WHERE ARE MOM'N'DAD? WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM?!
DON'T THINK ABOUT THEM, THEY CAN'T HELP US ANYMORE.
BLAM!
MARK!
WE'RE ON OUR OWN--
UNNNGNH!
RUN, JILL!
I WON'T LEAVE YOU!
THEY'LL CATCH YOU, JILL! GET OUT--
TOO LATE, KID.
WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE?! WHAT DO YOU WANT?!
WE ARE PURIFIERS.
AND BY NOW, YOUNG MAN...
..OUR INTENTIONS SHOULD BE OBVIOUS.

DON'T CRY, BOY. I'M SENDING YOU TO JOIN YOUR PARENTS.
YOU KILLED THEM!
THEM-- AND YOU.
BOOM!
MARK!?!
MARK...?
WHY?
BOOM!
BECAUSE YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO LIVE.
HOIST THEIR BODIES UP ON THAT SWING-- AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT.
THIS MISSION'S TAKEN TOO LONG AS IT IS.

AND FOR A TIME...
MUTIE
...THE SCHOOL-YARD IS QUIET ONCE MORE.
THE PURIFIERS INTENDED THAT THE BODIES BE FOUND TOMORROW MORNING -- AN EXAMPLE FOR ALL THE SCHOOL-CHILDREN TO SEE.
BUT, LONG BEFORE DAWN...
AN EXECUTION.
NOT THE FIRST. FAR FROM THE LAST -- ONLY THIS TIME, THE VICTIMS ARE CHILDREN.
SO YOUNG...
...SO INNOCENT...
... TO KNOW SUCH TERROR AND PAIN.
THEIR ONLY CRIME -- THAT THEY HAD BEEN BORN.
AND FOR ALL MY VAUNTED POWER, I WAS UNABLE TO SAVE THEM.
NO MORE SHALL DIE -- BUT THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS ARTROCITY! WHATEVER THE COST, HOWEVER LONG IT TAKES, I WILL HUNT THEM DOWN --
--AND MAKE THEM PAY!!

"IF THERE BE FOUND AMONG YOU... MAN OR WOMAN, THAT HATH WROUGHT WICKEDNESS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD THY GOD, IN TRANSGRESSING HIS COVENANT, AND HATH GONE AND SERVED OTHER GODS, AND WORSHIPPED THEM, EITHER THE SUN OR MOON, OR ANY OF THE HOSTS OF HEAVEN, WHICH I HAVE NOT COMMANDED...
"...AND IT BE TOLD THEE, AND THOU... BEHOLD IT TO BE TRUE... THEN SHALT THOU BRING FORTH THAT MAN AND THAT WOMAN, WHICH HAVE COMMITTED THAT WICKED THING...
NEW YORK CITY...
...THE STRYKER BUILDING, HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE WORLDWIDE EVANGELICAL STRYKER CRUSADE.
"...AND SHALT STONE THEM WITH STONES...
"...TILL THEY DIE."
Holy Bible
THY KINGDOM COME, LORD, THY WILL BE DONE.
ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.
BZZZZT!
YES?
THE BRIEFING TAPES ARE READY, REVEREND.
THEN RUN THEM, BESS. AND WOULD YOU HAVE SOME SANDWICHES AND FRESH COFFEE SENT UP, PLEASE?
I GOT SO INVOLVED IN WRITING SUNDAY'S SERMON, I FORGOT TO BREAK FOR DINNER.

SUBJECTS: THE UNCANNY ***X-MEN***, A TEAM OF SO-CALLED SUPERHEROES, WHOSE MEMBERSHIP CONSISTS EXCLUSIVELY OF ***MUTANTS***, PEOPLE BORN WITH EXTRAORDINARY POWERS AND ABILITIES. CURRENTLY, THERE ARE SIX.

"***CYCLOPS***-- CAPABLE OF PROJECTING FORCE BEAMS FROM HIS EYES.

"THESE '***OPTIC BLASTS***' CAN ONLY BE RESTRAINED AND CONTROLLED BY GLASSES OF ***RUBY QUARTZ***.

"***STORM***-- A SELF-STYLED PAGAN GODDESS, POSSESSING THE ABILITY TO MANIPULATE THE WEATHER.

"***WOLVERINE***-- FORMER CANADIAN SECRET AGENT, HIS SKELETON IS LACED WITH ADAMANTIUM, MAKING IT VIRTUALLY UNBREAKABLE.

"RAZOR-KEEN ADAMANTIUM CLAWS RETRACT INTO BIONIC HOUSINGS IN HIS FOREARMS.

"HIS BODY'S MUTANT HEALING FACTOR IS ABLE TO COPE WITH ALMOST ANY WOUND, DISEASE OR POISON.

"***COLOSSUS***-- WHO CAN TRANSFORM HIS BODY FROM FLESH AND BLOOD--

"--INTO SUPER-STRONG, NIGH-INVULNERABLE ORGANIC STEEL.

"***ARIEL***-- ABLE TO PHASE HER BODY THROUGH SOLID OBJECTS.

"***NIGHTCRAWLER***-- IN ADDITION TO EXCEPTIONAL ACROBATIC SKILLS AND THE ABILITY TO CLING TO WALLS AND CEILINGS...

"... HE IS A TELEPORTER.

"THE TEAM'S FOUNDER AND MENTOR, ***PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER***, IS A TELEPATH. THE X-MEN ARE BASED AT HIS SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS IN SALEM CENTER, NEW YORK, WHERE THEY--AND OTHER MUTANTS--COMPRISE THE STUDENT BODY."

NOK NOK

SORRY TO DISTURB YOU, REVEREND, BUT YOU'RE DUE AT THE ABC STUDIOS FOR TONIGHT'S BROADCAST.

THANKS, BESS.

ARE THOSE THE X-MEN?

THEY CERTAINLY ARE. BUT, GOD WILLING, IF ALL GOES WELL...

...NOT FOR VERY MUCH LONGER.

CHAPTER 1
73 WILLINGDON ROAD, IN THE SUBURBAN TOWN OF SALEM CENTER, WHERE FORMER PRIMA BALLERINA STEVIE HUNTER MAINTAINS BOTH HOME AND DANCE STUDIO.
BOOK NOOK
TAKE IT BACK!
TAKE BACK WHAT YOU SAID, DANNY, OR SO HELP ME--
--I'LL REARRANGE YOUR FACE!
KITTY, STOP THIS! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?!
LEMME ALONE, ILLYANA! THIS CREEP'S BEEN ON MY CASE ALL WEEK! I'VE HAD IT WITH HIM!
C'MON, DANNY, LET'S HEAR YOUR APOLOGY--WHILE YOU CAN STILL TALK!
KATYA! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
HUH?!?
PETER--!
OWW!
YOU LOUSY--! NOW YOU'RE REALLY GONNA GET IT!
LET THE LITTLE TRAMP LOOSE, ILLYANA--
--I'LL BLACKEN HER OTHER EYE!
YOU WILL DO NOTHING--EITHER OF YOU!
STAY OUT OF THIS, PETER. IT ISN'T YOUR FIGHT, YOU DIDN'T HEAR WHAT HE SAID!
SETTLE DOWN, KITTY!
GET AHOLD OF YOURSELF!
YOU'RE PHASING!

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON OUT HERE!?!
IT'S KITTY'S FAULT, Ms. HUNTER! SHE STARTED IT!
IS THIS TRUE?
I SWUNG FIRST--
--BECAUSE DANNY SHOT HIS MOUTH OFF ONCE TOO OFTEN!
YOUR TURN, DANIEL. EXPLAIN.
I WAS TALKIN' ABOUT THE STRYKER CRUSADE, AN' ALL THE GOOD IT DOES.
MY FOLKS AN' I ARE MEMBERS, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?
TELL HER THE REST, CREEP--ABOUT HOW REVEREND STRYKER'S GONNA SAVE HUMANITY...
...FROM THE GODLESS HORDES OF MUTANTKIND!
WELL, HE IS! MUTIES ARE EVIL! THEY DESERVE WHATEVER THEY GET!
YOU WANNA MAKE SOME-THIN' OF IT, MUTIE-LOVER?!
YOU HAVE BOTH MADE YOUR POINTS, YOUNG MAN. I SUGGEST YOU LET MATTERS END THERE.
RIGHT. HEY, ANY-THING YOU SAY, Mr. RASPUTIN. NO PROBLEM.
NEXT TIME, PRYDE--WHEN "KING KONG" HERE ISN'T AROUND TO PROTECT YOU--IT'LL BE MY TURN.
THANKS A LOT, PETER.
FORGIVE ME, KATYA. I SIMPLY DID NOT WANT TO SEE THE BOY HURT.
WITH YOUR TRAINING, YOU COULD'VE CRIPPLED DANNY--OR WORSE.
HE'D'VE DONE THE SAME TO ME, I BET.
C'MON, LET'S GET YOU INSIDE AND CLEANED UP.
HOW CAN YOU ALL BE SO CALM?! DIDN'T YOU HEAR WHAT HE SAID?!
THEY'RE ONLY WORDS, CHILD.
SUPPOSE HE'D CALLED ME A NIGGER-LOVER, STEVIE?!
WOULD YOU BE SO DAMN' TOLERANT THEN?!!

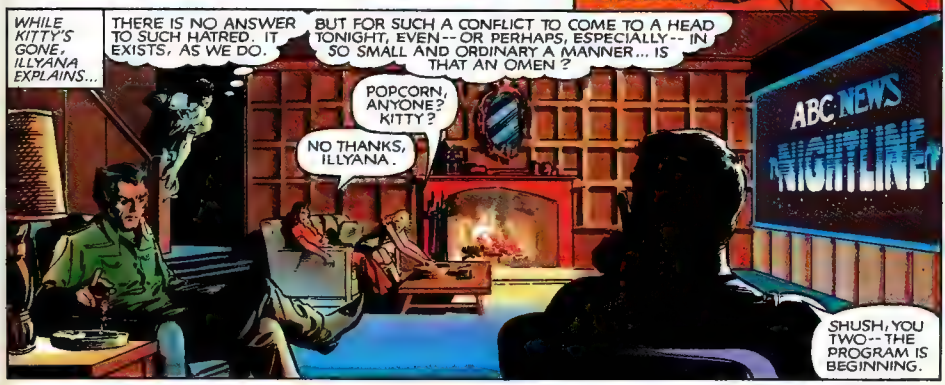
YOU AND YOUR SISTER HAD BETTER GO AFTER HER, PETER-- SEE SHE GETS HOME SAFE.
I'LL SPEAK TO DANNY, AND MAKE CERTAIN THIS SORT OF THING NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN.
KITTY IS UPSET, STEVIE. SHE DID NOT THINK ABOUT WHAT SHE WAS SAYING.
SHE... DID NOT MEAN...
OF COURSE SHE DID, MY FRIEND. SHE MEANT EVERY WORD.
AND SHE WAS RIGHT.
THE HUNTER WOMAN IS GOING BACK INSIDE.
BOOKS
ONE SHOT WOULD DO THE TRICK. SHE'D NEVER KNOW WHAT HIT HER, AND WITH A SILENCER, NO ONE WOULD HEAR A THING.
SHE ISN'T A MUTANT, PARTNER. LEAVE HER BE.
SHE'S WORSE-- SHE TREATS THOSE MUTIE SCUM LIKE REAL HUMAN BEINGS.
OUR MISSION'S SURVEILLANCE, NOT ASSASSINATION. BE PATIENT, GEORGE--ONCE WE'VE DEALT WITH THE MUTIES, THERE'LL BE PLENTY OF TIME FOR TRAITORS LIKE HER.
MISSION CENTRAL, THIS IS ROVER TEAM THREE. COLOSSUS, HIS SISTER ILLYANA, AND ARIEL ARE RETURNING TO THE SCHOOL. SITUATION NORMAL.
OPERATION HEADHUNTER CAN PROCEED AS SCHEDULED.

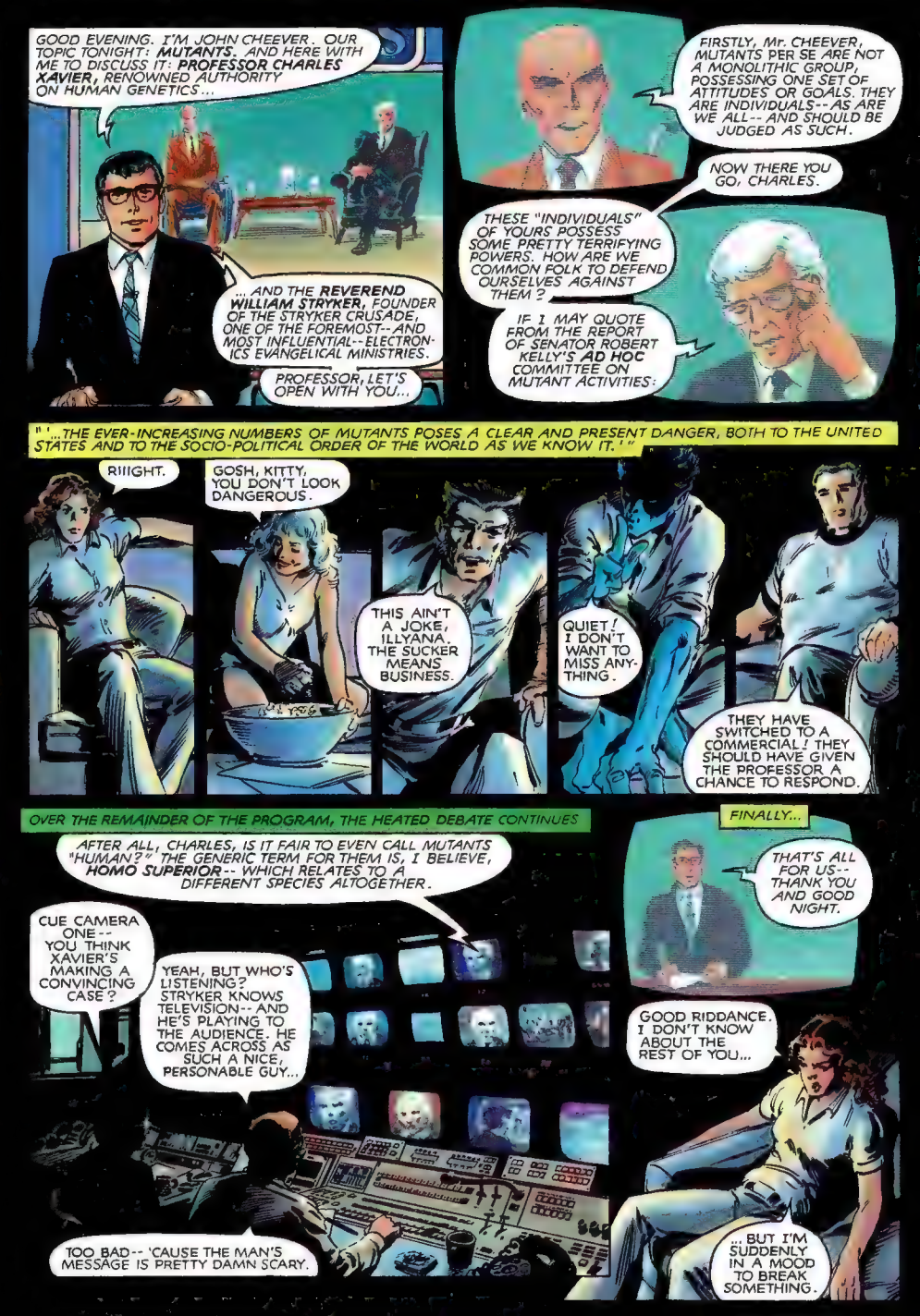
A FEW MILES OUTSIDE TOWN, PETER RASPUTIN TURNS OFF GRAYMALKIN LANE AND UP THE SCHOOL'S DRIVE. THE ESTATE -- SPRAWLED ALONG THREE MILES OF LAKEFRONT -- HAS BEEN IN XAVIER'S FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS AND HAS BECOME A MUCH-BELOVED HOME TO THE X-MEN, AS WELL.

WHAT KEPT YOU, PETER?
WE WERE WORRIED YOU'D MISS *HERR PROFESSOR'S* APPEARANCE ON TELEVISION. HURRY INSIDE -- THE SHOW'S ABOUT TO START!

THAT'S SOME SHINER YOU'RE SPORTIN', PUN'KIN -- SCRAP OR ACCIDENT?
SCRAP.
FAIR FIGHT?
I GUESS SO.
YOU WIN?
NOPE.
HOW COME?
I GUESS I DON'T HAVE YOUR KILLER INSTINCTS, WOLVERINE.
THAT ALL THERE IS TO IT?

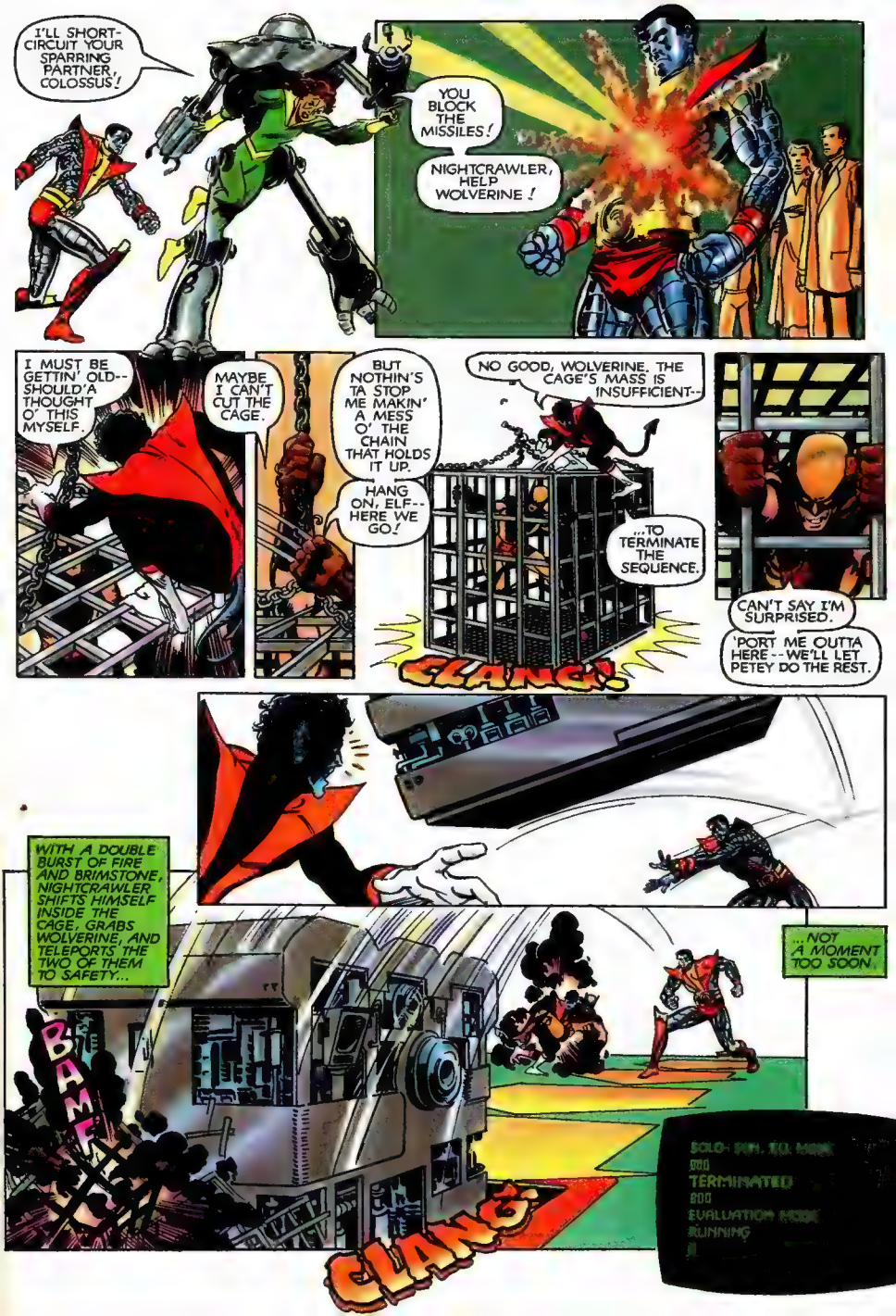
I WASN'T FIGHTING AN EVIL MUTANT, OR SUPER-VILLAIN, OR MURDER MACHINE, LOGAN -- JUST A KID WITH A BIG MOUTH. IT WAS NO BIG DEAL.
I'M GONNA WASH UP AN' CHANGE MY CLOTHES. I WON'T BE LONG.

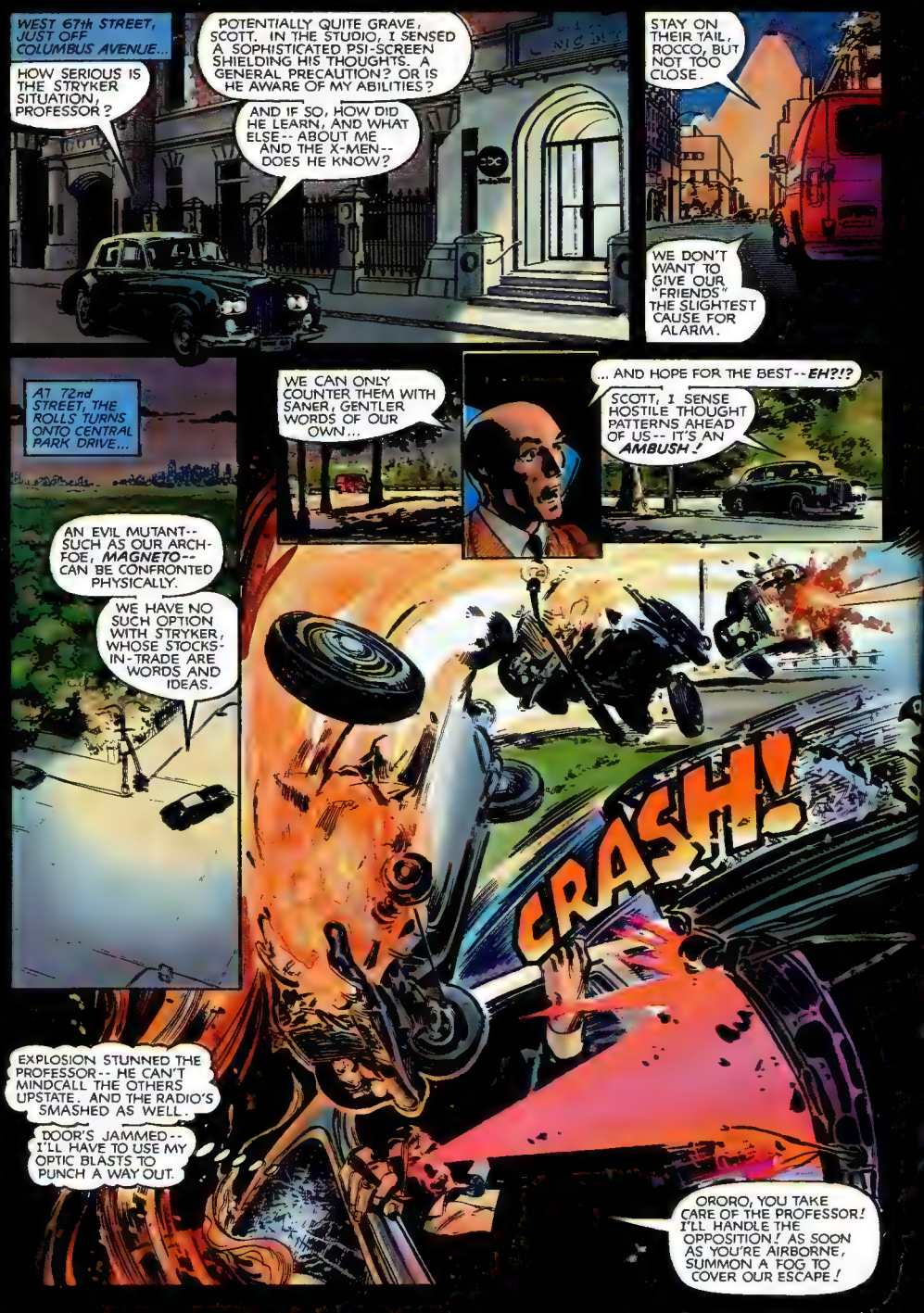

WHILE KITTY'S GONE, ILLYANA EXPLAINS...
THERE IS NO ANSWER TO SUCH HATRED. IT EXISTS, AS WE DO.
BUT FOR SUCH A CONFLICT TO COME TO A HEAD TONIGHT, EVEN -- OR PERHAPS, ESPECIALLY -- IN SO SMALL AND ORDINARY A MANNER... IS THAT AN OMEN?
POPCORN, ANYONE? KITTY?
NO THANKS, ILLYANA.
ABC NEWS
NIGHTLINE
SHUSH, YOU TWO -- THE PROGRAM IS BEGINNING.


GOOD EVENING. I'M JOHN CHEEVER. OUR TOPIC TONIGHT: MUTANTS. AND HERE WITH ME TO DISCUSS IT: PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER, RENOWNED AUTHORITY ON HUMAN GENETICS...
... AND THE REVEREND WILLIAM STRYKER, FOUNDER OF THE STRYKER CRUSADE, ONE OF THE FOREMOST--AND MOST INFLUENTIAL--ELECTRONICS EVANGELICAL MINISTRIES.
PROFESSOR, LET'S OPEN WITH YOU...
FIRSTLY, Mr. CHEEVER, MUTANTS PER SE ARE NOT A MONOLITHIC GROUP, POSSESSING ONE SET OF ATTITUDES OR GOALS. THEY ARE INDIVIDUALS--AS ARE WE ALL--AND SHOULD BE JUDGED AS SUCH.
NOW THERE YOU GO, CHARLES.
THESE "INDIVIDUALS" OF YOURS POSSESS SOME PRETTY TERRIFYING POWERS. HOW ARE WE COMMON FOLK TO DEFEND OURSELVES AGAINST THEM?
IF I MAY QUOTE FROM THE REPORT OF SENATOR ROBERT KELLY'S AD HOC COMMITTEE ON MUTANT ACTIVITIES:
"'...THE EVER-INCREASING NUMBERS OF MUTANTS POSES A CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER, BOTH TO THE UNITED STATES AND TO THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ORDER OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT.'"
RIIIGHT.
GOSH, KITTY, YOU DON'T LOOK DANGEROUS.
THIS AIN'T A JOKE, ILLYANA. THE SUCKER MEANS BUSINESS.
QUIET! I DON'T WANT TO MISS ANYTHING.
THEY HAVE SWITCHED TO A COMMERCIAL! THEY SHOULD HAVE GIVEN THE PROFESSOR A CHANCE TO RESPOND.
OVER THE REMAINDER OF THE PROGRAM, THE HEATED DEBATE CONTINUES
AFTER ALL, CHARLES, IS IT FAIR TO EVEN CALL MUTANTS "HUMAN?" THE GENERIC TERM FOR THEM IS, I BELIEVE, HOMO SUPERIOR--WHICH RELATES TO A DIFFERENT SPECIES ALTOGETHER.
CUE CAMERA ONE--YOU THINK XAVIER'S MAKING A CONVINCING CASE?
YEAH, BUT WHO'S LISTENING? STRYKER KNOWS TELEVISION--AND HE'S PLAYING TO THE AUDIENCE. HE COMES ACROSS AS SUCH A NICE, PERSONABLE GUY...
TOO BAD--'CAUSE THE MAN'S MESSAGE IS PRETTY DAMN SCARY.
FINALLY...
THAT'S ALL FOR US--THANK YOU AND GOOD NIGHT.
GOOD RIDDANCE. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE REST OF YOU...
...BUT I'M SUDDENLY IN A MOOD TO BREAK SOMETHING.

ANYONE WANT TO JOIN ME IN THE DANGER ROOM?
SOUNDS GOOD TO ME.
ILLYANA, WOULD YOU SET UP A TRAINING SEQUENCE WHILE WE CHANGE INTO COSTUME?
BAM!
TAKE STRYKER'S REMARK ABOUT MUTANTS NOT BEIN' HUMAN TO ITS ULTIMATE AN' WE'VE NO RIGHTS UNDER THE LAW.
NO RIGHT TO HAVE ANY RIGHTS. OR PROTECTION.
WE COULD BE EXTERMINATED, LIKE RATS. LEGALLY MURDERED.
IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT STRYKER'S SO POPULAR.
MILLIONS OF PEOPLE BELIEVE HIS EVERY WORD.
TO THINK US EVIL, SIMPLY BECAUSE WE EXIST? IT IS MADNESS.
I HAVE KNOWN SUCH FEAR AND HATRED FROM BIRTH...
...BUT TIME DOES NOT MAKE IT ANY EASIER TO TAKE.
THE OTHERS ARE SPOOKED -- WITH GOOD REASON.
I WISH THE PROFESSOR AND SCOTT AND ORORO WERE HERE.
MEANWHILE, ON THE WEST SIDE OF MANHATTAN...
A FASCINATING DISCUSSION, PROFESSOR. I'M SORRY WE HAD TO CUT IT SHORT.
I, TOO, Mr. CHEEVER. I FEAR REVEREND STRYKER MADE BY FAR THE BETTER PRESENTATION.
THIS DID NOT GO WELL, DID IT, SCOTT?
WE WERE SLAUGHTERED, ORORO. CHARLES WAS SPEAKING TO PEOPLE'S IDEALS, STRYKER TO THEIR FEARS. BUT, ON CAMERA, CHARLES LOOKS SO GRIM AND FORBODING-- ALMOST SCARY-- THAT HE ENDED UP MAKING STRYKER'S CASE FOR HIM.
LET'S HOPE THE DAMAGE ISN'T IRREPARABLE.
OH!
MY FAULT, Mr. SUMMERS. I SHOULD HAVE BEEN WATCHING WHERE I WAS GOING.
NO HARM DONE.
IS EVERYTHING READY, ANNE?
WE'LL TAKE THEM IN CENTRAL PARK, SIR.
SPLENDID. OUR PSI-SCREENS PREVENTED XAVIER FROM SCANNING OUR THOUGHTS, SO THE SURPRISE SHOULD BE TOTAL.

I'VE PROGRAMMED A SOLO/SYNERGISTIC EVALUATION SEQUENCE-- TO TEST YOU AS INDIVIDUALS AND A TEAM. YOUR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS TO PROTECT THE MANNEQUINOV FAMILY: PAPA, MOMMA, IVAN, AND LITTLE SVETLANA.
SECONDARY OBJECTIVES ARE: WOLVERINE, TO ESCAPE FROM THAT CAGE WITHOUT CUTTING THROUGH ITS BARS; ARIEL, TO USE YOUR POWERS OFFENSIVELY; COLOSSUS, TO DEFEAT THE ROBOT; AND NIGHTCRAWLER, TO MOVE THAT MODULE ONTO THE TARGET GRID. ITS MASS WILL TRIGGER A PRESSURE RELAY AND END THE SEQUENCE.
GOOD LUCK, X-MEN.
YOU'LL NEED IT.
EMERGENCY ABORT
PRESS
THE ROBOT HAS FIRED MISSILES-- HEADING FOR THE MANNEQUINOV'S!
I GOT 'EM, COLOSSUS!
BINGO! MY PHASING POWER DISRUPTED THE MISSILES' ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS AN' SENT 'EM OUT OF CONTROL.
CAN'T PUNCH MY WAY OUT-- FLAMIN' RULES-- MAYBE I CAN PICK THE LOCK WITH A CLAW.
I CANNOT PUSH SO GREAT A MASS, AND I DO NOT KNOW IF I CAN TELE-PORT IT.
HERE GOES NOTHING--!
AARRRGH!
MANAGED TO SHIFT... MYSELF... BUT NOT... MODULE...
STRAIN... SO GREAT-- I WAS NEARLY... TRAPPED IN TRANSITION...
BUT IF I CANNOT MOVE THAT BLOCK, THE TEST WILL NEVER END-- AND WE WILL HAVE FAILED.
THIS IS GETTING US NOWHERE. WE HAVEN'T A HOPE IF WE DO WHAT'S EXPECTED OF US.
GUYS, LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS IF WE CHANGE THE RULES.

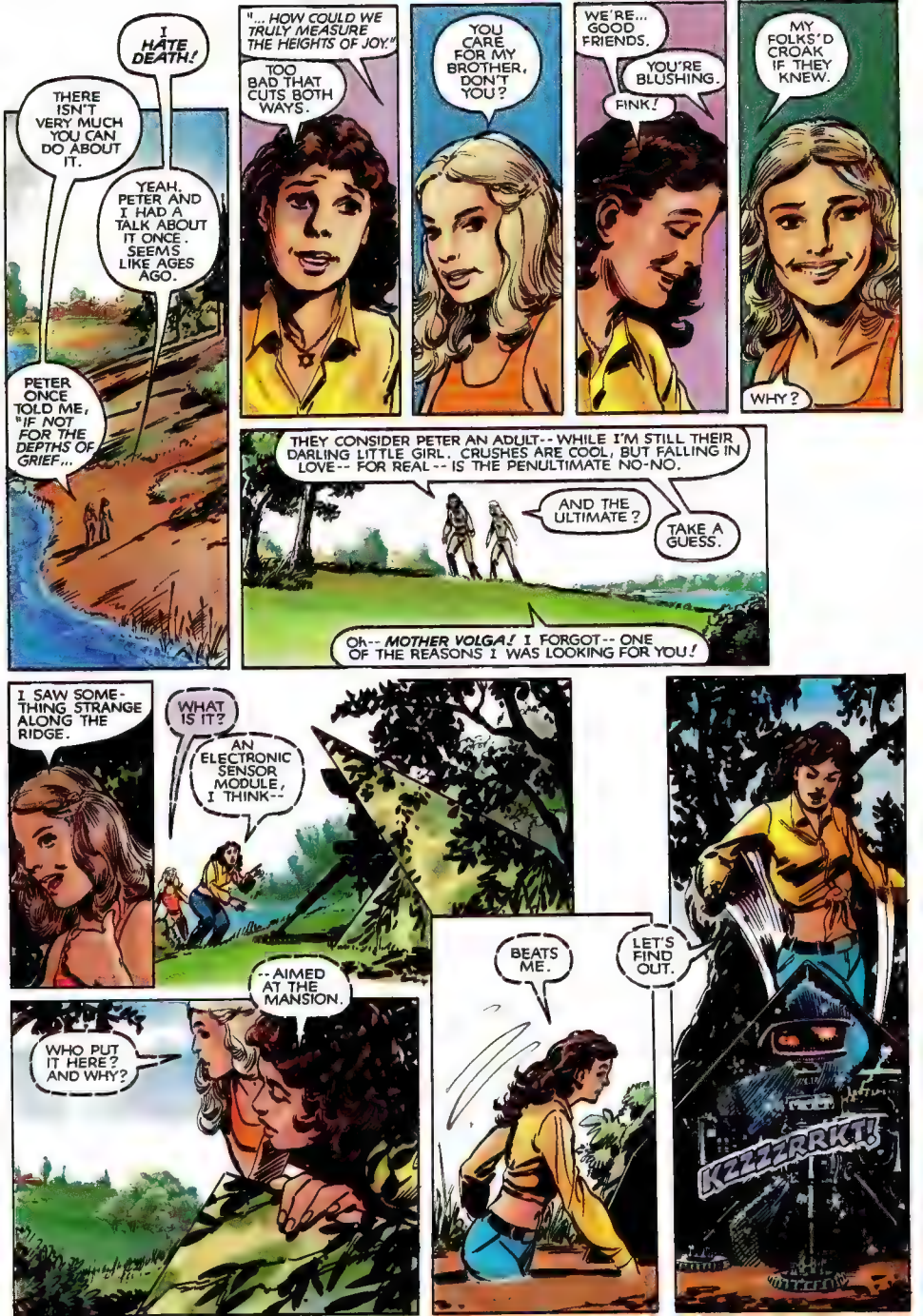

I'LL SHORT-CIRCUIT YOUR SPARRING PARTNER, COLOSSUS!
YOU BLOCK THE MISSILES!
NIGHTCRAWLER, HELP WOLVERINE!
I MUST BE GETTIN' OLD--SHOULD'A THOUGHT O' THIS MYSELF.
MAYBE I CAN'T CUT THE CAGE.
BUT NOTHIN'S TA STOP ME MAKIN' A MESS O' THE CHAIN THAT HOLDS IT UP.
HANG ON, ELF--HERE WE GO!
NO GOOD, WOLVERINE. THE CAGE'S MASS IS INSUFFICIENT--
...TO TERMINATE THE SEQUENCE.
CLANG!
CAN'T SAY I'M SURPRISED.
'PORT ME OUTTA HERE--WE'LL LET PETEY DO THE REST.
WITH A DOUBLE BURST OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE, NIGHTCRAWLER SHIFTS HIMSELF INSIDE THE CAGE, GRABS WOLVERINE, AND TELEPORTS THE TWO OF THEM TO SAFETY...
...NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON.
BAMF!
CLANG
TERMINATED
EVALUATION MODE
RUNNING


WEST 67th STREET, JUST OFF COLUMBUS AVENUE...
HOW SERIOUS IS THE STRYKER SITUATION, PROFESSOR?
POTENTIALLY QUITE GRAVE, SCOTT. IN THE STUDIO, I SENSED A SOPHISTICATED PSI-SCREEN SHIELDING HIS THOUGHTS. A GENERAL PRECAUTION? OR IS HE AWARE OF MY ABILITIES?
AND IF SO, HOW DID HE LEARN, AND WHAT ELSE-- ABOUT ME AND THE X-MEN-- DOES HE KNOW?
STAY ON THEIR TAIL, ROCCO, BUT NOT TOO CLOSE.
WE DON'T WANT TO GIVE OUR "FRIENDS" THE SLIGHTEST CAUSE FOR ALARM.
AT 72nd STREET, THE ROLLS TURNS ONTO CENTRAL PARK DRIVE...
AN EVIL MUTANT-- SUCH AS OUR ARCH-FOE, MAGNETO-- CAN BE CONFRONTED PHYSICALLY.
WE HAVE NO SUCH OPTION WITH STRYKER, WHOSE STOCKS-IN-TRADE ARE WORDS AND IDEAS.
WE CAN ONLY COUNTER THEM WITH SANER, GENTLER WORDS OF OUR OWN...
... AND HOPE FOR THE BEST-- EH?!?
SCOTT, I SENSE HOSTILE THOUGHT PATTERNS AHEAD OF US-- IT'S AN AMBUSH!
CRASH!!
EXPLOSION STUNNED THE PROFESSOR-- HE CAN'T MINDCALL THE OTHERS UPSTATE. AND THE RADIO'S SMASHED AS WELL.
DOOR'S JAMMED-- I'LL HAVE TO USE MY OPTIC BLASTS TO PUNCH A WAY OUT.
ORORO, YOU TAKE CARE OF THE PROFESSOR! I'LL HANDLE THE OPPOSITION! AS SOON AS YOU'RE AIRBORNE, SUMMON A FOG TO COVER OUR ESCAPE!

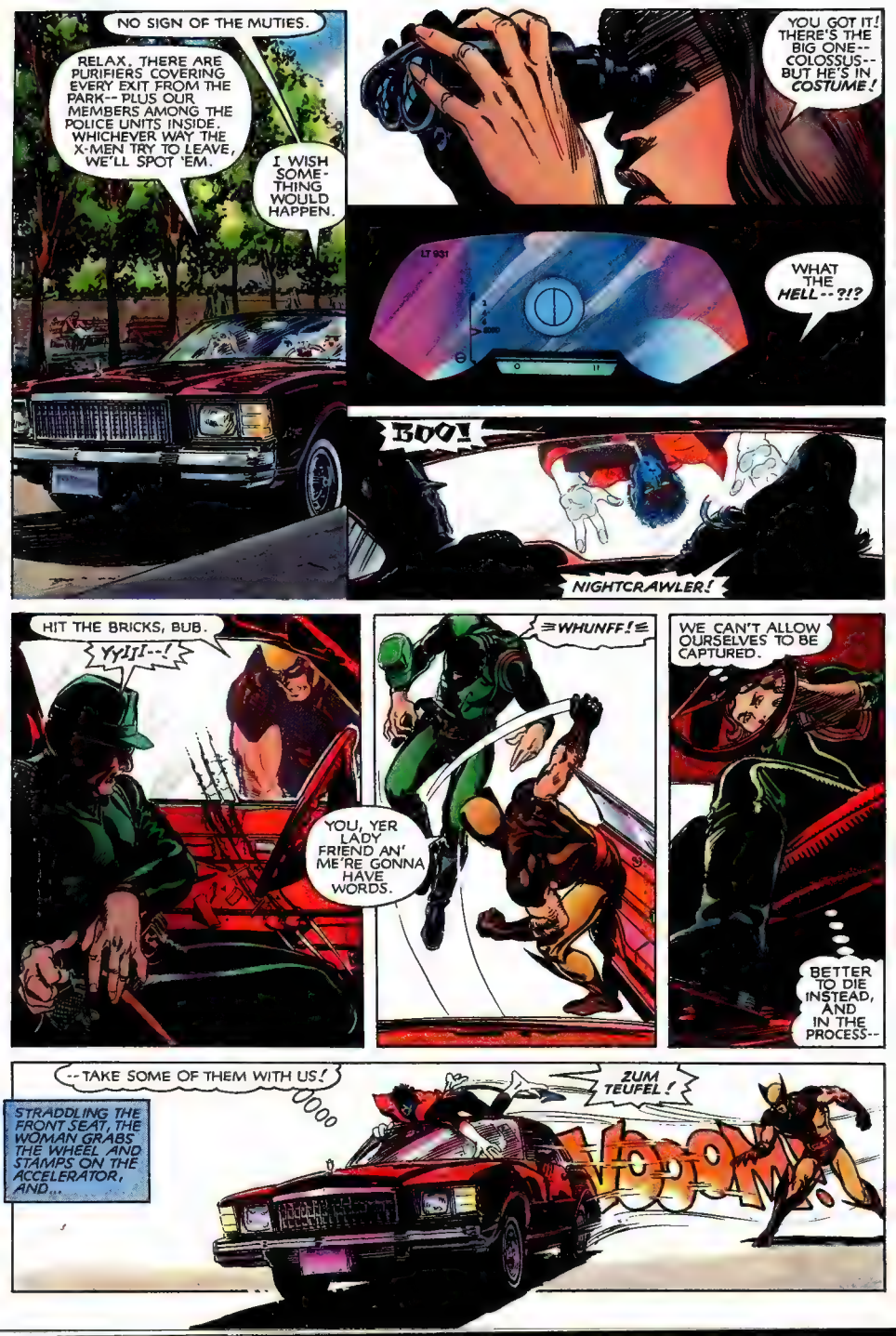
SCOTT!!
K-P OW!
KPOW
VROOOSH
WHOOM!
PERFECT.
ROCCO, NOTIFY THE REVEREND: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.

SOLO/SYN MODE EVALUATION
SOLO SYN TOTAL
CODE 98.2 97.6 97.9
ARIEL
COLOSSUS 97.3 96.4 96.8
NIGHT-CRAWLER 94.3 99.2 96.7
WOLVERINE 99.0 99.0 99.0
AAHHH-- THIS WORKOUT WAS JUST WHAT I NEEDED. I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER.
HOW COME SO GRUMPY, WOLVERINE? YOU DID REAL GOOD.
JA, MEIN FREUND-- WHAT'S THE SECRET OF YOUR SUCCESS?
CLEAN LIVIN', O' COURSE.
YOU'RE NOT TAKING THIS VERY SERIOUSLY.
WHY SHOULD I? IT'S A GAME.
AN' GAMES ARE FOR KIDS.
THERE ARE TIMES, GUYS, WHEN THAT MAN SCARES ME SILLY.
BRRRING!
I'LL ANSWER IT. PROBABLY SCOTT, RINGING FROM NEW YORK.
XAVIER'S SCHOOL-- KURT WAGNER SPEAKING-- MAY I HELP YOU?
WHAT--?!?
TORAVISCH, IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?
FUZZY-ELF, YOU LOOK SO AWFUL!
THAT WAS THE POLICE. THERE'S BEEN AN... ACCIDENT.
PROFESSOR XAVIER, SCOTT AND ORORO ARE DEAD.

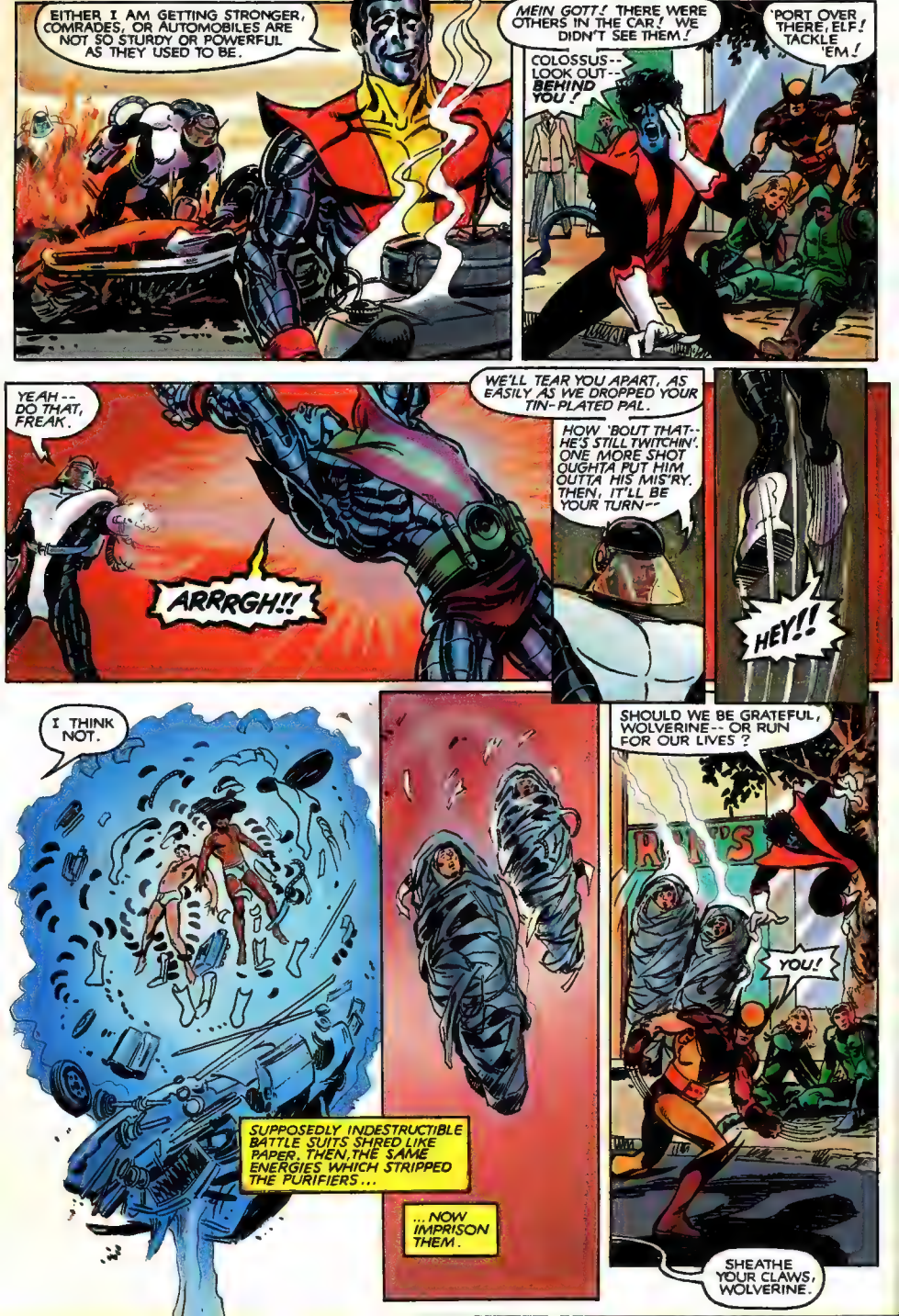
CHAPTER 2
... THE NEXT DAY.
HI!
THE OTHERS HAVE GONE INTO NEW YORK. WE'RE ON OUR OWN.
KITTY... ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M ALIVE. DOES THAT COUNT?
YOU'VE BEEN UP HERE ON THE BLUFF FOR AGES. WANT SOME COMPANY?
IF I HAD, ILLYANA...
... I'D HAVE STAYED IN THE DAMN HOUSE!
KATYA!
WHAT!?!
THEY WERE MY FRIENDS, TOO.
I S'POSE I SHOULD BE USED TO THIS, ACCEPT IT AS A REALITY OF THE LIFE WE LEAD.
BUT AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH, TO HAVE THEM KILLED IN A LOUSY CAR CRASH!
AND THE REALLY CRAZY THING IS...
... I STILL DON'T BELIEVE IT'S TRUE.

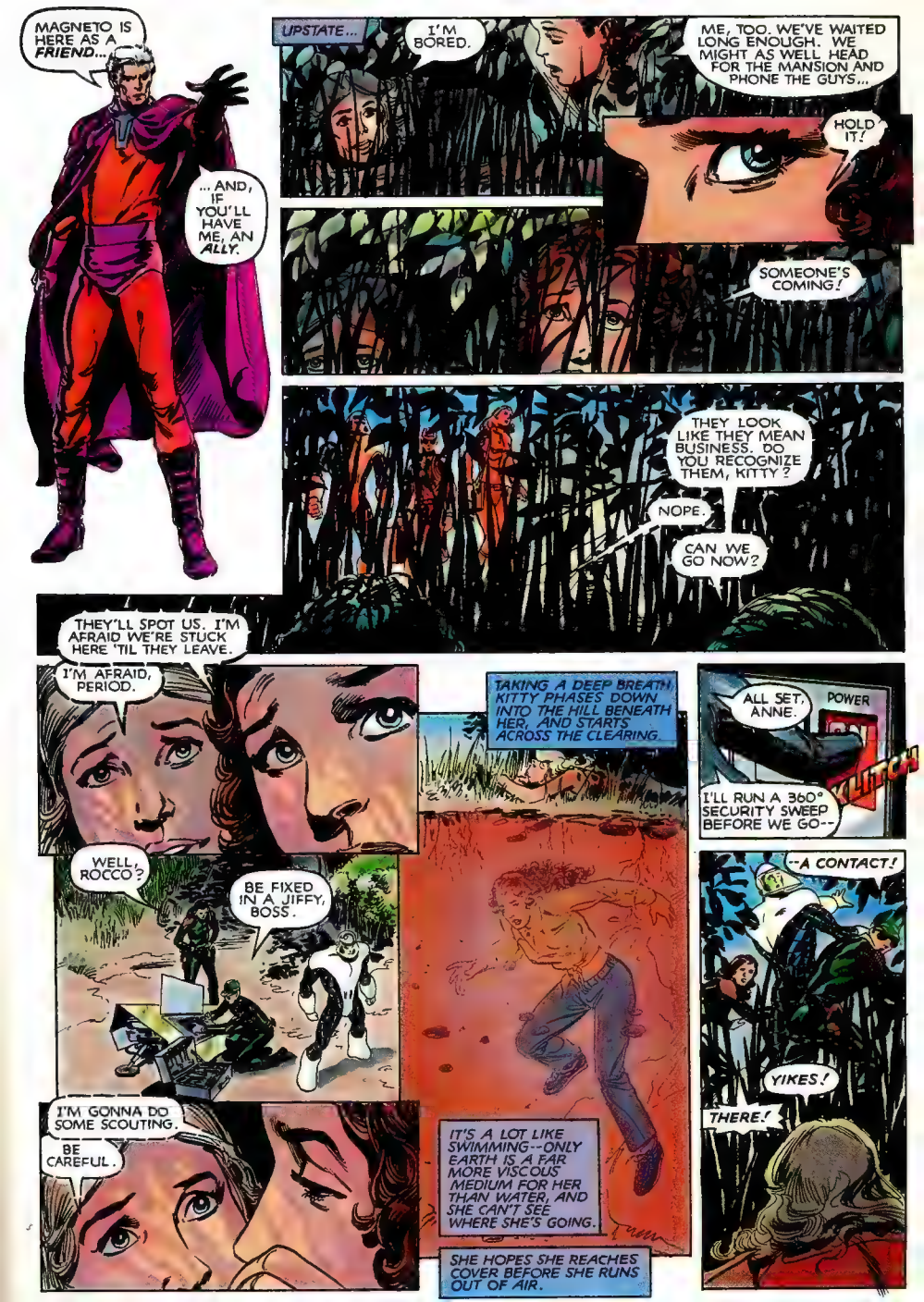

I HATE DEATH!
THERE ISN'T VERY MUCH YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT.
YEAH. PETER AND I HAD A TALK ABOUT IT ONCE. SEEMS LIKE AGES AGO.
PETER ONCE TOLD ME, "IF NOT FOR THE DEPTHS OF GRIEF...
"... HOW COULD WE TRULY MEASURE THE HEIGHTS OF JOY."
TOO BAD THAT CUTS BOTH WAYS.
YOU CARE FOR MY BROTHER, DON'T YOU?
WE'RE... GOOD FRIENDS.
YOU'RE BLUSHING.
FINK!
MY FOLKS'D CROAK IF THEY KNEW.
WHY?
THEY CONSIDER PETER AN ADULT-- WHILE I'M STILL THEIR DARLING LITTLE GIRL. CRUSHES ARE COOL, BUT FALLING IN LOVE-- FOR REAL -- IS THE PENULTIMATE NO-NO.
AND THE ULTIMATE?
TAKE A GUESS.
Oh-- MOTHER VOLGA! I FORGOT-- ONE OF THE REASONS I WAS LOOKING FOR YOU!
I SAW SOMETHING STRANGE ALONG THE RIDGE.
WHAT IS IT?
AN ELECTRONIC SENSOR MODULE, I THINK--
-- AIMED AT THE MANSION.
WHO PUT IT HERE? AND WHY?
BEATS ME.
LET'S FIND OUT.
KZZZRRKT!

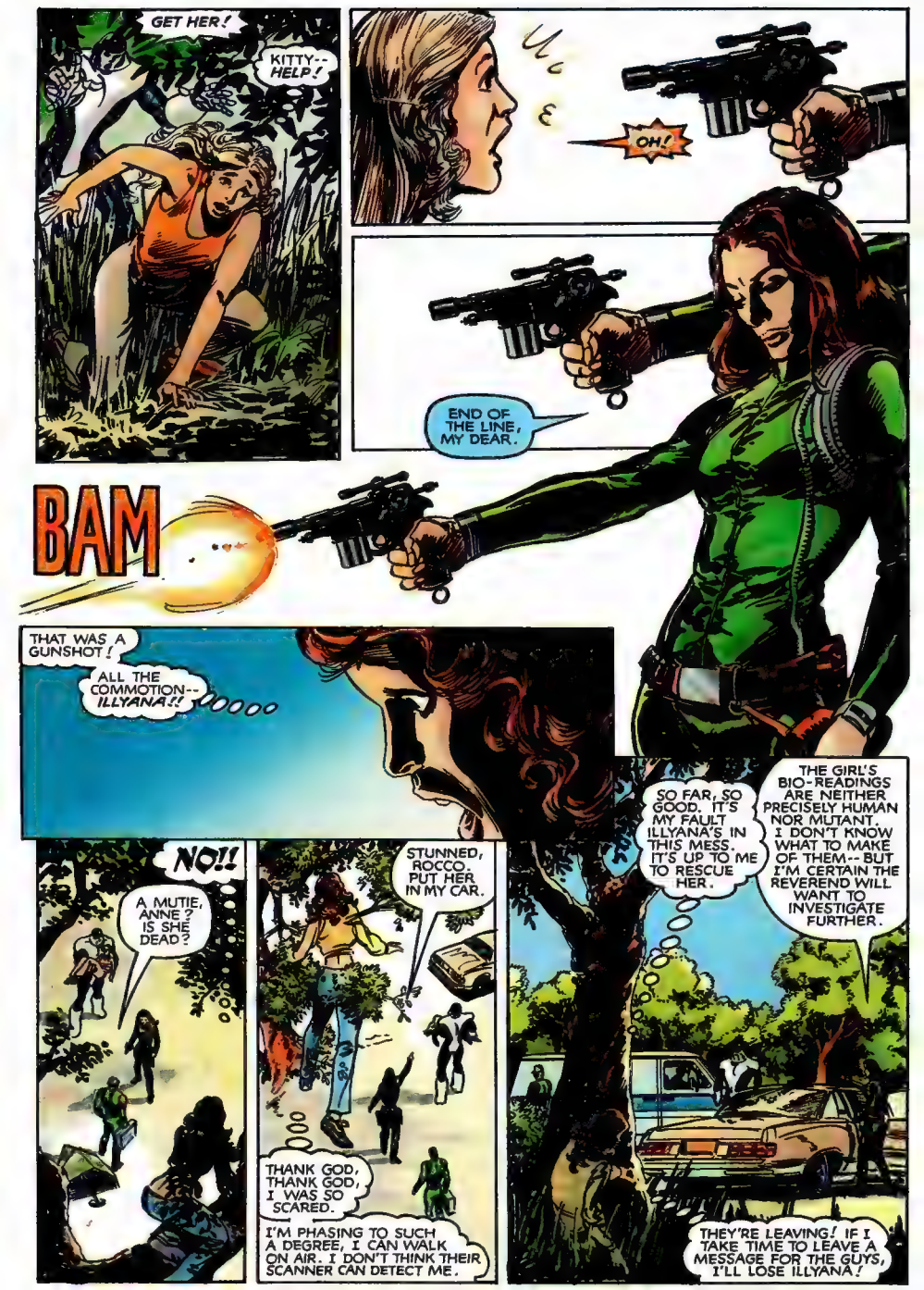
THAT WAS IMPRESSIVE. NOW WHAT?
WE WAIT TILL SOMEBODY COMES TO FIX THE THING.
AND WE'LL BE HERE TO GREET THEM?
DON'T WORRY, ILLYANA. I'LL PROTECT YOU.
WONDERFUL.
CENTRAL PARK, MANHATTAN...
I DON'T CARE WHAT THE FLAMIN' COPS SAY, PETEY. THIS WAS NO ACCIDENT.
DOES IT MATTER, TOVARISCH? OUR FRIENDS ARE JUST AS DEAD.
THREE CORPSES WERE FOUND IN THE WRECK, PAL...
...BUT THEY WEREN'T OUR FRIENDS.
CAR TOTALLY CONSUMED BY FIRE. BODIES BURNED BEYOND RECOGNITION. VERY NICE. VERY NEAT.
TROUBLE IS, THE SCENTS ARE WRONG.
I DO NOT UNDER-STAND.
IT'S A CON. SOMEONE WENT TO A HELLUVA LOT OF TROUBLE TO CONVINCE THE LAW--AND US--THAT CHARLEY, SCOTT AN' 'RORO WERE KILLED IN A CAR CRASH.
HOW CAN YOU BE CERTAIN?
I'VE STAGED MORE'N A FEW SUCH "ACCIDENTS" IN MY DAY, BOY--THIS HAS ALL THE EARMARKS.
SHOULD WE NOT TELL THE POLICE?
NOPE.
KURT, WHAT'CHA GOT?
YOUR HUNCH PAID OFF, MEIN FREUND. A CAR PARKED ACROSS FROM OUR ROLLS, JUST AFTER WE ARRIVED. TWO PEOPLE CHECKED OUT THE ROLLS. NOW THEY'RE WATCHING AND WAITING.
WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE?
LET'S NAIL THE BASTARDS.

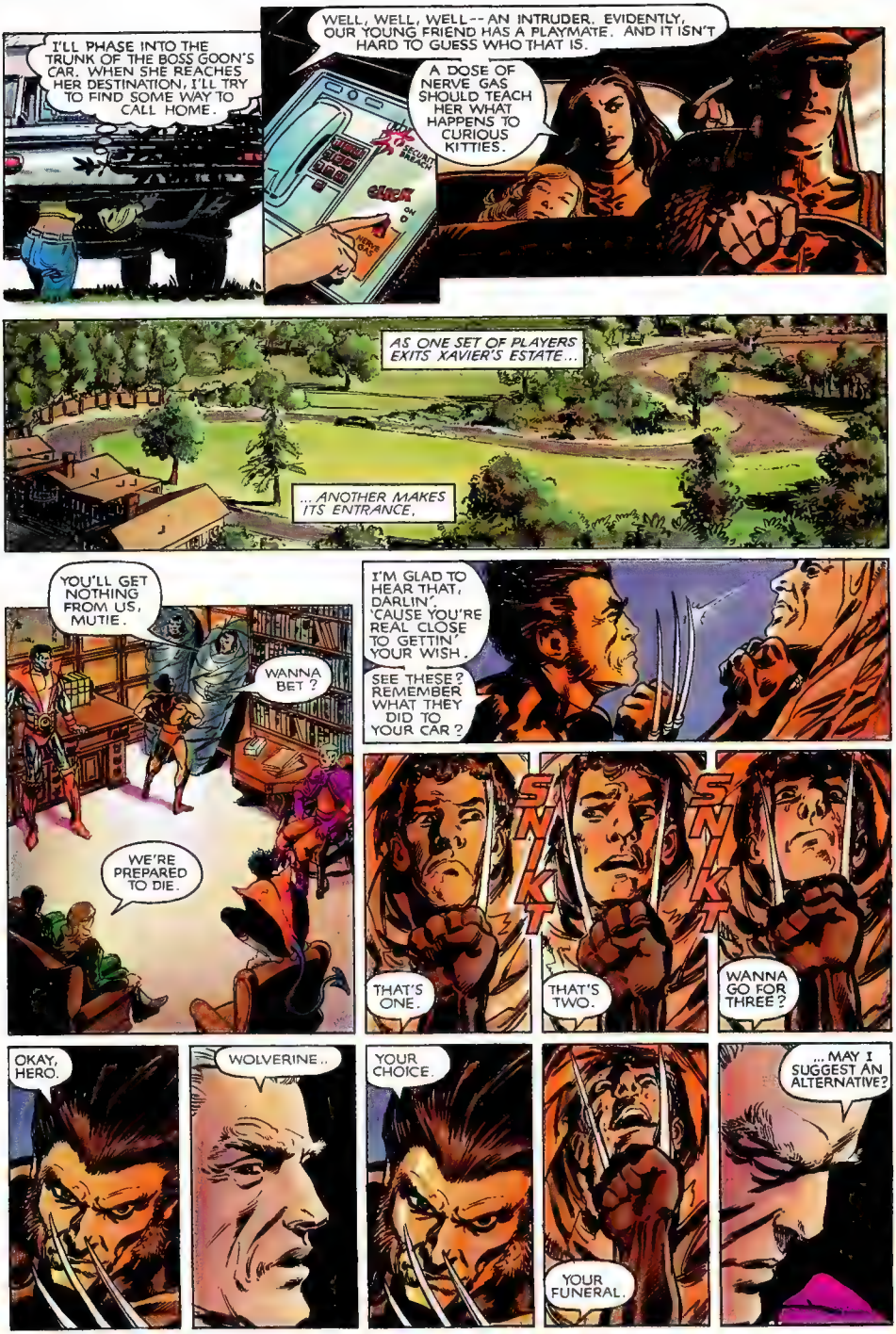

NO SIGN OF THE MUTIES.
RELAX. THERE ARE PURIFIERS COVERING EVERY EXIT FROM THE PARK-- PLUS OUR MEMBERS AMONG THE POLICE UNITS INSIDE. WHICHEVER WAY THE X-MEN TRY TO LEAVE, WE'LL SPOT 'EM.
I WISH SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN.
YOU GOT IT! THERE'S THE BIG ONE-- COLOSSUS-- BUT HE'S IN COSTUME!
WHAT THE HELL--?!?
BOO!
NIGHTCRAWLER!
HIT THE BRICKS, BUB.
YYYII--!
YOU, YER LADY FRIEND AN' ME'RE GONNA HAVE WORDS.
WHUNFF!
WE CAN'T ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE CAPTURED.
BETTER TO DIE INSTEAD, AND IN THE PROCESS--
--TAKE SOME OF THEM WITH US!
UOOO
STRADDLING THE FRONT SEAT, THE WOMAN GRABS THE WHEEL AND STAMPS ON THE ACCELERATOR, AND...
ZUM TEUFEL!
VROOM!

IF I TRY TO EVADE THEM, THEY WILL FOLLOW. ON THIS BUSY STREET, INNOCENT PEOPLE ARE SURE TO BE HARMED.
THAT, I CANNOT ALLOW.
WITH THE SPEED OF THOUGHT, THE TRANSFORMATION FROM MAN TO ARMORED JUGGERNAUT IS COMPLETE.
THE CAR'S BUILDING UP TOO MUCH SPEED.
IF THE WOMAN REMAINS INSIDE, SHE'LL NEVER SURVIVE THE IMPACT.
MY APOLOGIES FOR RUINING YOUR IMMINENT MARTYRDOM, FRAULEIN...
...BUT YOU'RE COMING WITH ME.
BAM!
THIS INTER-SECTION IS MOMENTARILY FREE OF TRAFFIC.
I MUST STOP THE CAR HERE.
AND--I--SHALL!!
THWAM!


EITHER I AM GETTING STRONGER, COMRADES, OR AUTOMOBILES ARE NOT SO STURDY OR POWERFUL AS THEY USED TO BE.
MEIN GOTT! THERE WERE OTHERS IN THE CAR! WE DIDN'T SEE THEM!
COLOSSUS--LOOK OUT--BEHIND YOU!
'PORT OVER THERE, ELF! TACKLE 'EM!
YEAH--DO THAT, FREAK.
ARRRGH!!
WE'LL TEAR YOU APART, AS EASILY AS WE DROPPED YOUR TIN-PLATED PAL.
HOW 'BOUT THAT--HE'S STILL TWITCHIN'. ONE MORE SHOT OUGHTA PUT HIM OUTTA HIS MIS'RY. THEN, IT'LL BE YOUR TURN--
HEY!!
I THINK NOT.
SUPPOSEDLY INDESTRUCTIBLE BATTLE SUITS SHRED LIKE PAPER. THEN, THE SAME ENERGIES WHICH STRIPPED THE PURIFIERS...
... NOW IMPRISON THEM.
SHOULD WE BE GRATEFUL, WOLVERINE--OR RUN FOR OUR LIVES?
YOU!
SHEATHE YOUR CLAWS, WOLVERINE.


MAGNETO IS HERE AS A FRIEND...
... AND, IF YOU'LL HAVE ME, AN ALLY.
UPSTATE...
I'M BORED.
ME, TOO. WE'VE WAITED LONG ENOUGH. WE MIGHT AS WELL HEAD FOR THE MANSION AND PHONE THE GUYS...
HOLD IT!
SOMEONE'S COMING!
THEY LOOK LIKE THEY MEAN BUSINESS. DO YOU RECOGNIZE THEM, KITTY?
NOPE.
CAN WE GO NOW?
THEY'LL SPOT US. I'M AFRAID WE'RE STUCK HERE 'TIL THEY LEAVE.
I'M AFRAID, PERIOD.
WELL, ROCCO?
BE FIXED IN A JIFFY, BOSS.
I'M GONNA DO SOME SCOUTING.
BE CAREFUL.
TAKING A DEEP BREATH, KITTY PHASES DOWN INTO THE HILL BENEATH HER, AND STARTS ACROSS THE CLEARING.
IT'S A LOT LIKE SWIMMING--ONLY EARTH IS A FAR MORE VISCOUS MEDIUM FOR HER THAN WATER, AND SHE CAN'T SEE WHERE SHE'S GOING.
SHE HOPES SHE REACHES COVER BEFORE SHE RUNS OUT OF AIR.
ALL SET, ANNE.
POWER
GLITCH
I'LL RUN A 360° SECURITY SWEEP BEFORE WE GO--
--A CONTACT!
YIKES!
THERE!

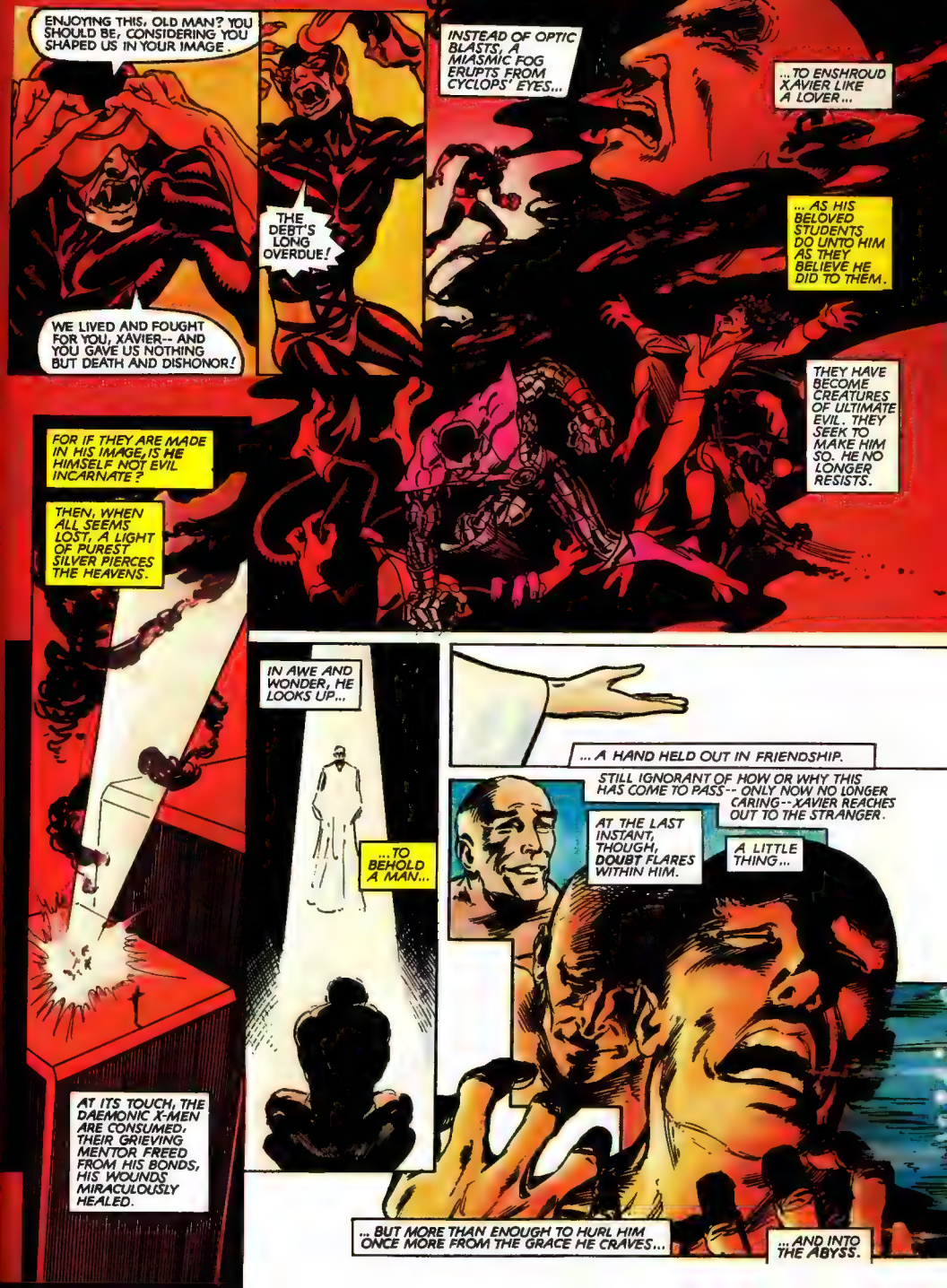

GET HER!
KITTY-- HELP!
OH!
END OF THE LINE, MY DEAR.
BAM
THAT WAS A GUNSHOT!
ALL THE COMMOTION-- ILLYANA!!
NO!!
A MUTIE, ANNE? IS SHE DEAD?
STUNNED, ROCCO. PUT HER IN MY CAR.
THANK GOD, THANK GOD, I WAS SO SCARED.
I'M PHASING TO SUCH A DEGREE, I CAN WALK ON AIR. I DON'T THINK THEIR SCANNER CAN DETECT ME.
SO FAR, SO GOOD. IT'S MY FAULT ILLYANA'S IN THIS MESS. IT'S UP TO ME TO RESCUE HER.
THE GIRL'S BIO-READINGS ARE NEITHER PRECISELY HUMAN NOR MUTANT. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF THEM-- BUT I'M CERTAIN THE REVEREND WILL WANT TO INVESTIGATE FURTHER.
THEY'RE LEAVING! IF I TAKE TIME TO LEAVE A MESSAGE FOR THE GUYS, I'LL LOSE ILLYANA!


I'LL PHASE INTO THE TRUNK OF THE BOSS GOON'S CAR. WHEN SHE REACHES HER DESTINATION, I'LL TRY TO FIND SOME WAY TO CALL HOME.
WELL, WELL, WELL--AN INTRUDER. EVIDENTLY, OUR YOUNG FRIEND HAS A PLAYMATE. AND IT ISN'T HARD TO GUESS WHO THAT IS.
A DOSE OF NERVE GAS SHOULD TEACH HER WHAT HAPPENS TO CURIOUS KITTIES.
SECURITY BREACH
CLICK
ON
HERE
AS ONE SET OF PLAYERS EXITS XAVIER'S ESTATE...
...ANOTHER MAKES ITS ENTRANCE.
YOU'LL GET NOTHING FROM US, MUTIE.
WANNA BET ?
WE'RE PREPARED TO DIE.
I'M GLAD TO HEAR THAT, DARLIN'. 'CAUSE YOU'RE REAL CLOSE TO GETTIN' YOUR WISH.
SEE THESE? REMEMBER WHAT THEY DID TO YOUR CAR ?
SNIKT
SNIKT
THAT'S ONE.
THAT'S TWO.
WANNA GO FOR THREE ?
OKAY, HERO.
WOLVERINE..
YOUR CHOICE.
YOUR FUNERAL.
... MAY I SUGGEST AN ALTERNATIVE?

YOUR LUCKY DAY, PAL.
I DOUBT THAT.
I... I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU, MUTIE!
THE PURIFIER RESISTS...
...BUT THE OUTCOME IS NEVER TRULY IN DOUBT.
FIRST HE, THEN HIS COMPANIONS, TELL ALL THEY KNOW.
THEY SERVE THE STRYKER CRUSADE, WHOSE GOAL IS THE COMPLETE AND UTTER ERADICATION OF MUTANTKIND. AND THE MEANS TO ACHIEVE THAT END WILL BE THE MAN WHO HAS DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO CHAMPIONING THE CAUSE OF HOMO SUPERIOR: CHARLES XAVIER.
ONCE MORE, GENOCIDE IN THE NAME OF GOD.
A STORY AS OLD AS THE RACE.
WAS THIS..., NECESSARY?
YUP.
BUT IF WE USE OUR FOES' METHODS, MY FRIEND...
...HOW THEN ARE BETTER THAN TH

Chapter 3 :
...THE WORLD TRADE CENTER, MANHATTAN.
"And they bring him unto the place Golgotha...
and they crucify him."
CHARLES XAVIER DOES NOT BELIEVE THIS TO BE REAL.
THAT DOES NOT SAVE HIM.

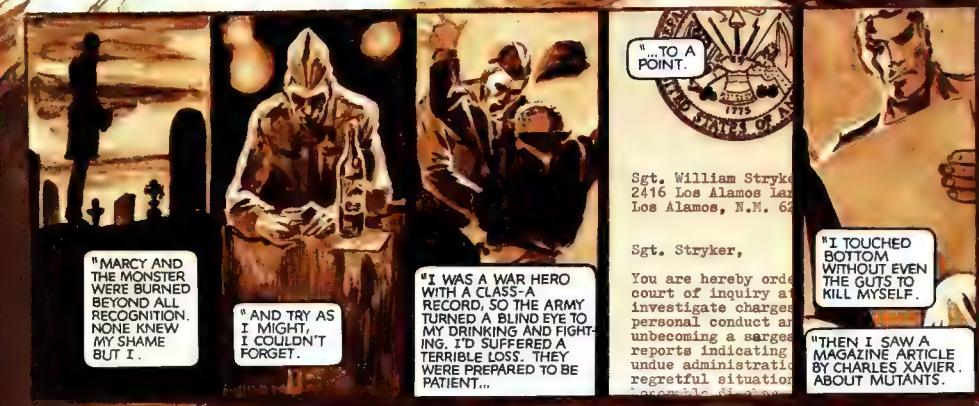
IN TURN...
...EACH X-MAN COMES...
...TO PAY HIS RESPECTS...
...AND BID HIM FOND FAREWELL.


ENJOYING THIS, OLD MAN? YOU SHOULD BE, CONSIDERING YOU SHAPED US IN YOUR IMAGE.
THE DEBT'S LONG OVERDUE!
WE LIVED AND FOUGHT FOR YOU, XAVIER-- AND YOU GAVE US NOTHING BUT DEATH AND DISHONOR!
INSTEAD OF OPTIC BLASTS, A MIASMIC FOG ERUPTS FROM CYCLOPS' EYES...
...TO ENSHROUD XAVIER LIKE A LOVER...
...AS HIS BELOVED STUDENTS DO UNTO HIM AS THEY BELIEVE HE DID TO THEM.
THEY HAVE BECOME CREATURES OF ULTIMATE EVIL. THEY SEEK TO MAKE HIM SO. HE NO LONGER RESISTS.
FOR IF THEY ARE MADE IN HIS IMAGE, IS HE HIMSELF NOT EVIL INCARNATE?
THEN, WHEN ALL SEEMS LOST, A LIGHT OF PUREST SILVER PIERCES THE HEAVENS.
AT ITS TOUCH, THE DAEMONIC X-MEN ARE CONSUMED: THEIR GRIEVING MENTOR FREED FROM HIS BONDS, HIS WOUNDS MIRACULOUSLY HEALED.
IN AWE AND WONDER, HE LOOKS UP...
...TO BEHOLD A MAN...
...A HAND HELD OUT IN FRIENDSHIP.
STILL IGNORANT OF HOW OR WHY THIS HAS COME TO PASS-- ONLY NOW NO LONGER CARING-- XAVIER REACHES OUT TO THE STRANGER.
AT THE LAST INSTANT, THOUGH, DOUBT FLARES WITHIN HIM.
A LITTLE THING...
...BUT MORE THAN ENOUGH TO HURL HIM ONCE MORE FROM THE GRACE HE CRAVES...
...AND INTO THE ABYSS.

DAMN! WE NEARLY HAD HIM THAT TIME.
STATUS REPORT UPDATE: SUBJECT SUSPENDED IN ISOLATION TANK, UNDER TOTAL SENSORY DEPRIVATION...
... HIS DISORIENTATION INTENSIFIED THROUGH THE USE OF DRUGS AND DIRECT PHYSICAL STIMULUS OF THE BRAIN VIA IMPLANTED ELECTRODES. MINDWASH PROCEDURES INITIATED FIFTEEN HOURS AGO.
RESULTS...
...ENCOURAGING.
HOWEVER, HIS RESISTANCE IS FAR MORE DETERMINED THAN I EXPECTED.
A LIGHT, PHILLIP?
THANK YOU, REVEREND.
DON'T DESPAIR, MY FRIEND.
WE KNEW FROM THE START THIS WOULDN'T BE EASY.
I'M NOT WORRIED ABOUT BREAKING HIM.
IT'S DOING THE JOB PROPERLY -- WITHIN YOUR TIME LIMIT.
CARE TO SEE OUR OTHER "GUESTS?"
KLIK
THOSE CHAIRS NOT ONLY NEUTRALIZE THE MUTANTS' ABILITIES, THEY PSIONICALLY LINK THEM WITH XAVIER. THE DRUGS WE ADMINISTERED HEIGHTEN HIS PSYCHIC SENSITIVITY TO THE POINT...
...WHERE IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO SCREEN OUT THEIR THOUGHTS.
WE TORTURE THEM...
...AND XAVIER SUFFERS.
HE'S AWARE THAT THE PAIN COMES FROM THEM AND IN HIS CONFUSED STATE, BELIEVES THEY'RE DOING IT DELIBERATELY. HIS OWN SUBCONSCIOUS FEARS AND GUILTS PROVIDE THE RATIONALE FOR THEIR BETRAYAL.
STRYKER!
WE HAVE DONE YOU NO HARM-- WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!

BECAUSE YOU EXIST.
AND THAT EXISTENCE IS AN AFFRONT TO THE LORD.
HE LOOKS AT THE TWO X-MEN AND TIME AND MEMORY SUDDENLY, UNEXPECTEDLY, TURN BACK UPON THEMSELVES, TO A SIMPLER DAY, THIRTY YEARS GONE.
"THERE WAS NO CRUSADE, THEN," HE REMEMBERS, "I WASN'T EVEN A MINISTER. QUITE THE OPPOSITE. MASTER-SERGEANT WILLIAM STRYKER, U.S. ARMY RANGERS -- A TOUGH-AS-NAILS, HELL-RAISING PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER, ON SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT TO THE MILITARY NUCLEAR TEST PROGRAM. THE BRASS TOLD US THE DANGER WAS MINIMAL. WE BELIEVED THEM.
"WHEN MY TOUR WAS OVER, MY WIFE MARCY AND I HEADED SOUTH -- TO VISIT MY FAMILY IN PHOENIX.
"WE NEVER MADE IT.
"ALONE, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NEVADA DESERT, I DELIVERED MY SON.
"HE -- IT -- WAS A MONSTER!
"FACED WITH THAT ABOMINATION, I DID WHAT HAD TO BE DONE.
"AND WHEN MARCY, HALF-UNCONSCIOUS, ASKED FOR HER BABY...
"... I TOOK HER IN MY ARMS, HELD HER CLOSE...
"... AND BROKE HER NECK.
"THE CAR HAD BEEN LEAKING GAS SINCE THE CRASH -- IT WAS A MIRACLE THERE'D BEEN NO EXPLOSION. I PLANNED TO CHANGE THAT. I PLACED MARCY INSIDE THE WRECK, HER... BABY IN HER ARMS. I CLIMBED IN BESIDE HER...
"... AND LIT A MATCH.

EASY, FELLA. DON'T TRY TO MOVE. THE AMBULANCE IS ON ITS WAY.
YOU'RE A LUCKY MAN, THAT EXPLOSION MUST'VE BLOWN YOU CLEAR. YOU'RE GONNA BE ALL RIGHT.


"MARCY AND THE MONSTER WERE BURNED BEYOND ALL RECOGNITION. NONE KNEW MY SHAME BUT I.
"AND TRY AS I MIGHT, I COULDN'T FORGET.
"I WAS A WAR HERO WITH A CLASS-A RECORD, SO THE ARMY TURNED A BLIND EYE TO MY DRINKING AND FIGHTING. I'D SUFFERED A TERRIBLE LOSS. THEY WERE PREPARED TO BE PATIENT...
"...TO A POINT.
Sgt. William Stryke
2416 Los Alamos Lan
Los Alamos, N.M. 62
Sgt. Stryker,
You are hereby orde
court of inquiry a
investigate charges
personal conduct a
unbecoming a sergea
reports indicating
undue administrati
regretful situatio
"I TOUCHED BOTTOM WITHOUT EVEN THE GUTS TO KILL MYSELF.
"THEN I SAW A MAGAZINE ARTICLE BY CHARLES XAVIER. ABOUT MUTANTS.

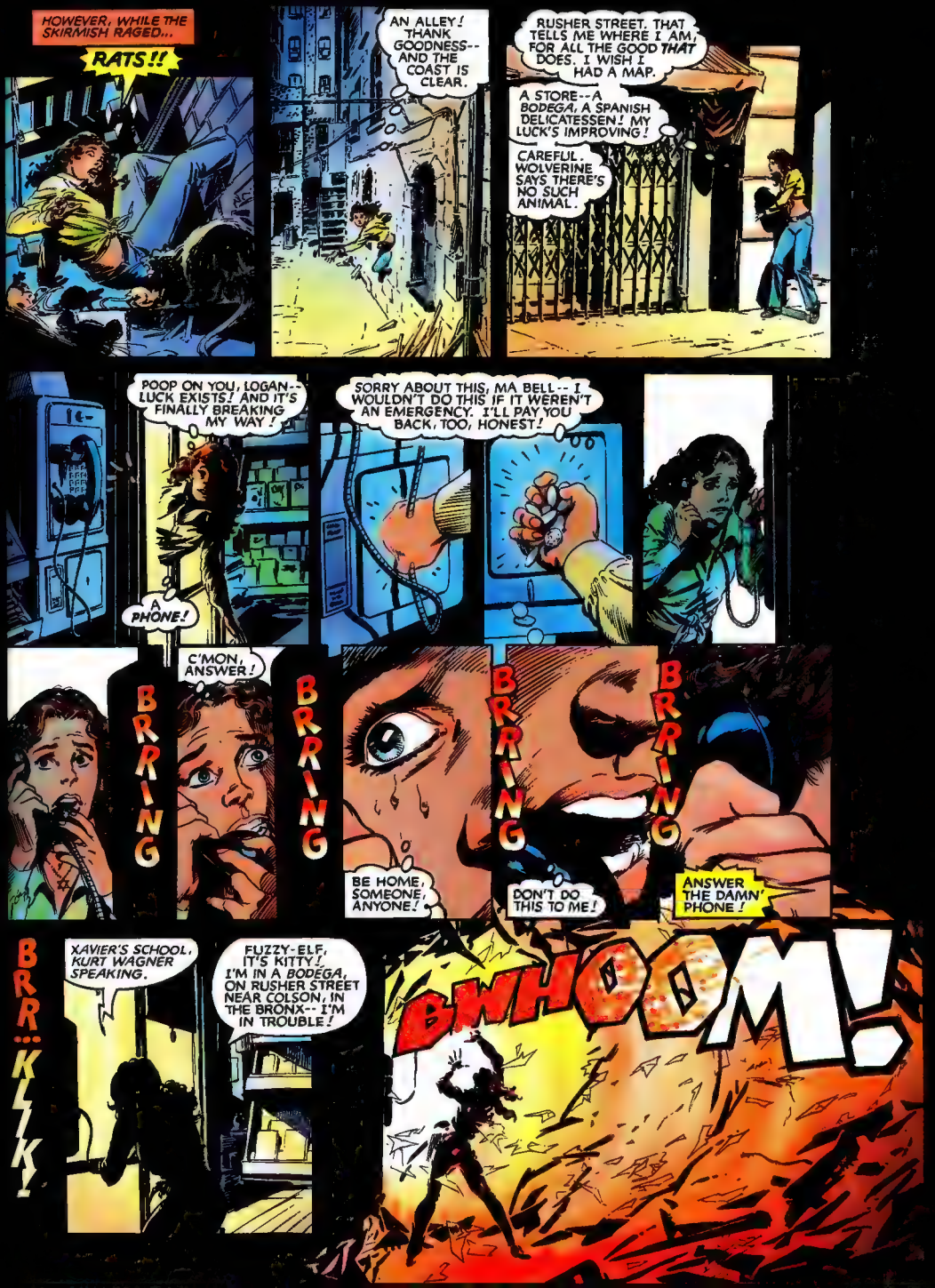
" AFTER MONTHS OF TORMENT, I KNEW WHAT THE MONSTER WAS.
"A MUTANT.
"BUT--COULD I HAVE FATHERED SUCH A CREATURE? WAS MY LIFE SO WICKED THAT THE LORD SOUGHT TO PUNISH ME THROUGH MY SON? AND IF SO, WHY THEN LET ME LIVE? IF I WAS EVIL, SHOULDN'T I HAVE BEEN CONDEMNED TO ETERNAL DAMNATION?
"I PRAYED FOR GUIDANCE.
"IT WAS GIVEN ME.
the William STRYKER program
"THE EVIL--THE SIN--WAS MARCY'S, NOT MINE.
"SHE WAS THE VESSEL USED BY GOD TO REVEAL UNTO ME SATAN'S MOST INSIDIOUS PLOT AGAINST HUMANITY--TO CORRUPT US THROUGH OUR CHILDREN, WHILE THEY WERE STILL IN THE WOMB. THE LORD CREATED MAN AND WOMAN IN HIS IMAGE, BLESSED WITH HIS GRACE. MUTANTS BROKE THAT SACRED MOLD. THEY WERE CREATIONS, NOT OF GOD, BUT OF THE DEVIL.
"AND I HAD BEEN CHOSEN TO LEAD THE FIGHT AGAINST THEM.
FROM THAT LOWLY BEGINNING CAME MY MINISTRY. FOR A QUARTER-CENTURY, I LABORED IN THE WILDERNESS--AMASSING PHENOMENAL TEMPORAL POWER.
NOW, AT LAST, THE MOMENT HAS COME TO PUT THOSE RESOURCES TO USE!

HOW DID YOU LEARN OF THE X-MEN?
XAVIER INITIALLY FOUNDED YOUR GROUP...
...UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. HIS LIASON WAS FBI AGENT FRED DUNCAN, A SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE BUREAU--A DEVOTED MEMBER OF THE CRUSADE--PASSED COPIES OF DUNCAN'S FILES ON TO ME.
THE MORE I LEARNED OF YOUR MENTOR, THE MORE CONVINCED I BECAME THAT HE IS THE ANTICHRIST --THE SUPPOSED FRIEND OF MANKIND, WHO WILL LEAD US INSTEAD TO OUR DESTRUCTION.
I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND. IF WE'RE SUCH A THREAT, WHY HAVEN'T YOU KILLED US?
I HAVE MY REASONS, YOUNG MAN.
WHICH YOU'LL LEARN SOON ENOUGH.
TO YOUR REGRET.
BZZTB
YES?
ANNE HERE, REVEREND, EN ROUTE FROM XAVIER'S SCHOOL, REQUESTING INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING MY PRISONERS.
I TRUST YOUR JUDGEMENT ABOUT COLOSSUS' SISTER.
AND THE PRYDE GIRL?
KILL HER.
NO! SHE'S ONLY A CHILD!
"WHEN THE LORD THY GOD SHALL DELIVER THEM BEFORE THEE, THOU SHALT SMITE THEM...
"...AND UTTERLY DESTROY THEM; THOU SHALL MAKE NO COVENANT WITH THEM, NOR SHOW MERCY UNTO THEM."
CONTINUE, PHILLIP. IT'S GETTING LATE.
KITTY!
THUMP!

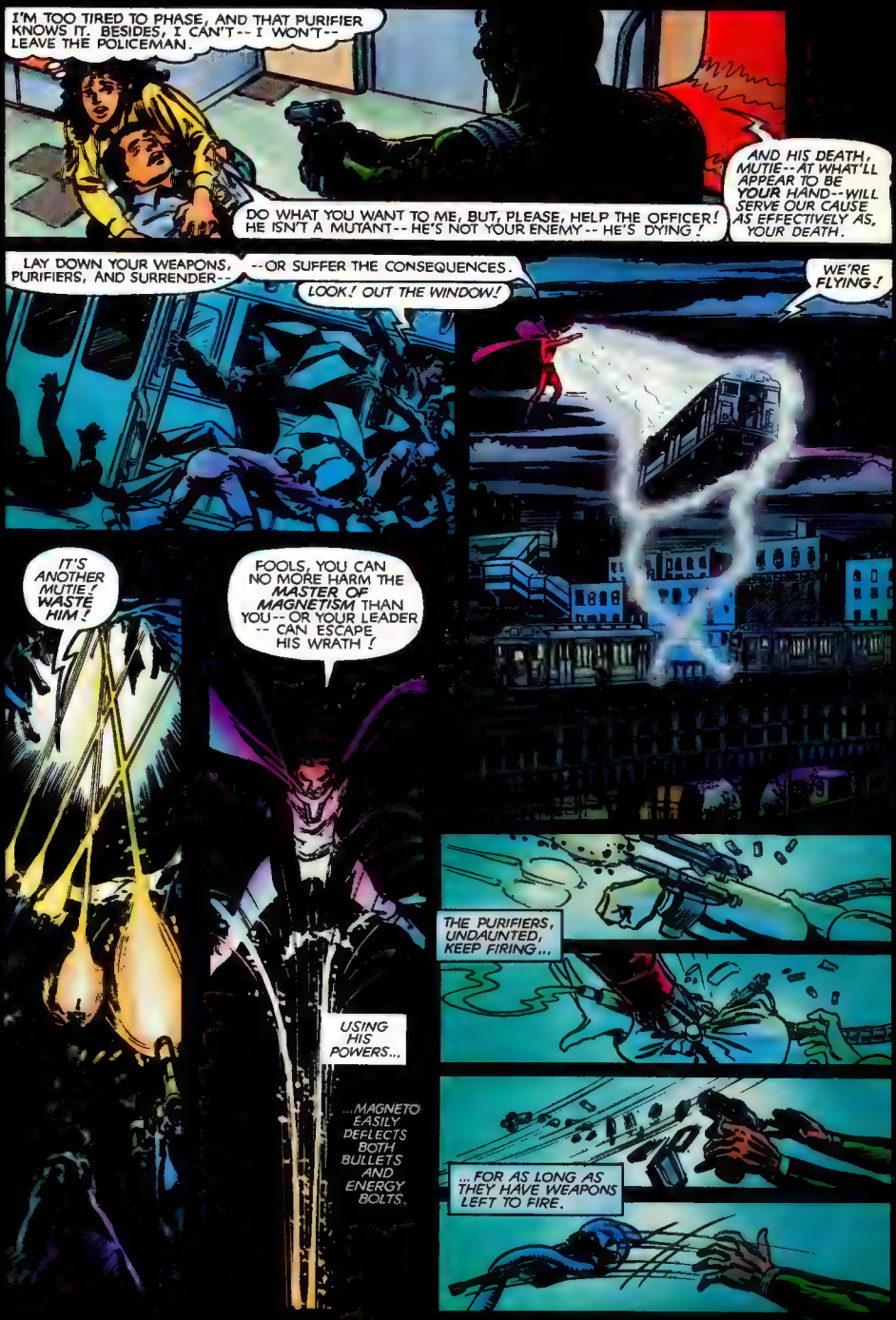
COLSON STREET, THE SOUTH BRONX...
SCREWY WEATHER. THE FORECAST WAS FOR CLEAR SKIES. INSTEAD, OUTTA NOWHERE...
...IT LOOKS LIKE A HELLUVA STORM BREWIN' OVER MANHATTAN.
THAT'S NO CONCERN OF OURS, ROCCO.
SENSORS INDICATE THAT PRYDE'S STILL IN THE TRUNK. THE NERVE GAS SHOULD HAVE RENDERED HER UNCONSCIOUS LONG AGO. PITY.
SHE SHOULD BE CONSCIOUS FOR THIS.
MUTIE
*PURIFIERS...
...DO YOUR DUTY.
MUTIE
MUTIE
ANNE -- THE CAR'S EMPTY!
THE BRAT'S SMARTER -- AND LUCKIER -- THAN I GAVE HER CREDIT FOR. STILL, SHE CAN'T HAVE GONE FAR.
AHA! A SIGNAL -- BEARING TWO-ZERO-FIVE, AT A HUNDRED-PLUS METERS. THAT'S HER.
FAN OUT. CUT OFF HER ESCAPE ROUTES.
SHOOT HER ON SIGHT.

IT'S SO DARK! EVEN WITH A FULL MOON, I CAN HARDLY SEE WHERE I'M GOING.
OUCH!
I PHASED THE INSTANT I HEARD THE GAS JETS, BUT I THINK SOME OF IT GOT ME. I FEEL AWFUL.
I CAN HARDLY CONCENTRATE ENOUGH TO WALK, MUCH LESS PHASE. AND FOR ALL THE HELP I'M LIKELY TO FIND IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD, I MIGHT AS WELL BE ON THE MOON.
SOME GREAT RESCUE THIS IS TURNING OUT TO BE-- I HOPE ILLYANA'S OKAY.
WHAT'S THAT--?!
OBOY! A FIRE! PEOPLE!
HELP ME, PLEASE! THEY'RE AFTER ME!
HELP!
HEY, BRO'-- COMP'NY.
YOU WAN' HELP, CHICA, WE BE GLAD TO 'BLIGE.
HEY, uh, MY MISTAKE. SORRY, FELLAS.
I'LL JUST BE ON MY WAY.
LEGGO! I CAN'T PHASE! HE GOT ME!
YOU WAN' PROTECTION, IT'S YOURS. WE DO THIS FOR YOU, YOU DO SOMETHIN' NICE FOR US, RIGHT?
WRONG.
LEAVIN', LI'L ONE?
SHE'S MINE.
BACK OFF, NICE'N'SLOW. ANYONE STUPID ENOUGH TO TRY SOMETHING WON'T LIVE TO REGRET IT.
THIS OUR TURF, WOMAN. YOU DON' GIVE NO ORDERS HERE.
THIS GUN SAYS DIFFERENT.

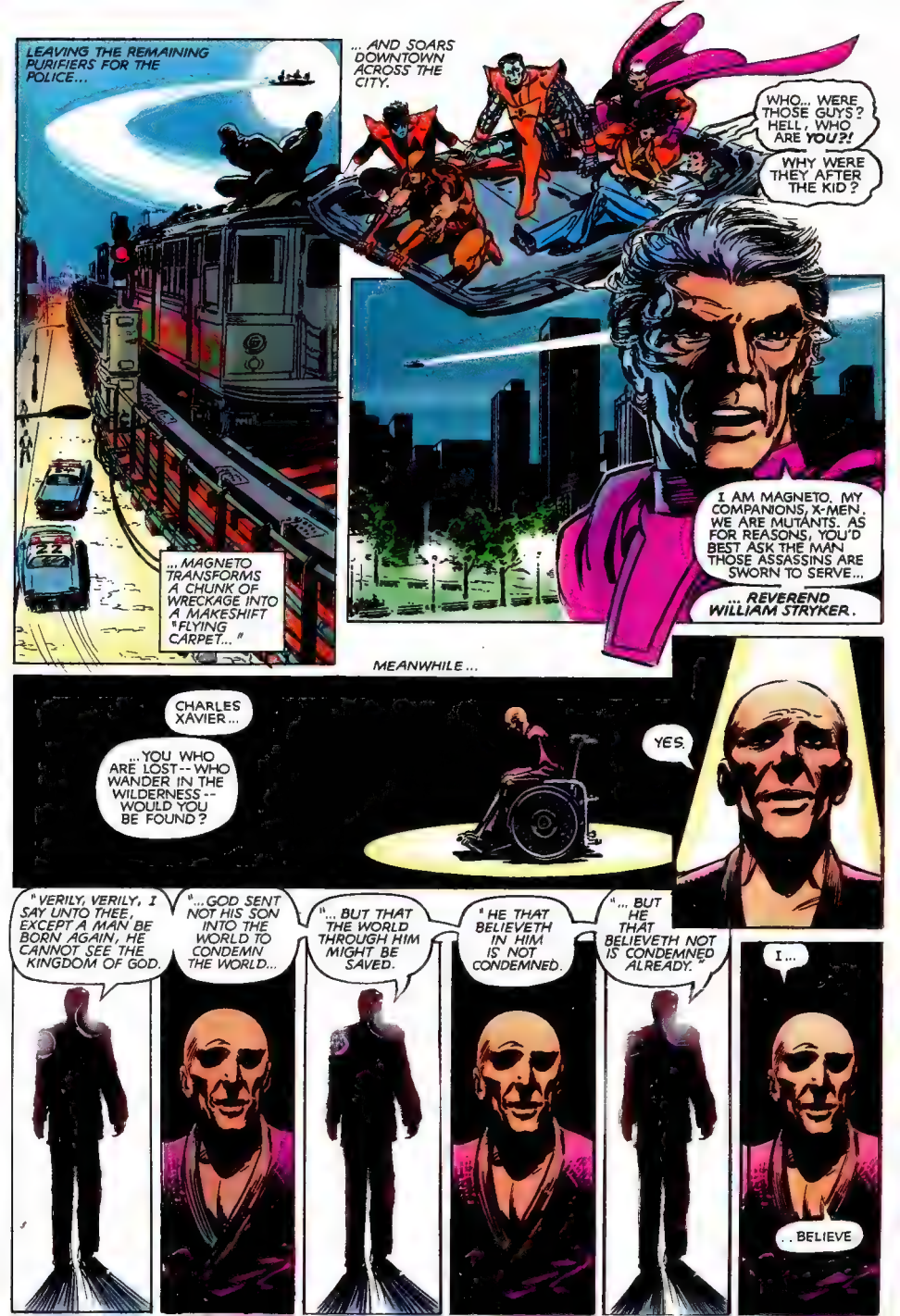
MOVE AWAY FROM THE GIRL.
WE SIX TO YOUR ONE, BITCH.
IF I HAVE TO.
AND UNLESS YOU PUT THAT HAND WHERE I CAN SEE IT...
YOU GONNA SMOKE US ALL?
...I'LL START WITH YOU.
I MANAGED TO CATCH MY BREATH. I'M IN AS GOOD A CONDITION AS I'M GONNA GET. WHILE THE GANG'S DISTRACTING THE PURIFIER...
...I HAVE A CHANCE TO RUN!
DAMN!
YOU WERE WATCHIN' JULIO' AN' LA CHICA, BITCH.
YOU SHOULD'A KEPT YOUR EYE ON ME.
AAHHH!
BLAM!
MARTIN!!
HE'S DEAD, BRO! SHE ICED OUR JEFE!
AN' WE'LL PAY HER IN KIND, MI HERMANOS--BLOOD FOR BLOOD!
TAKE HER!!
ANNE! WE HEARD GUNFIRE!
BUT I GUESS YOU DIDN'T NEED OUR HELP.
I HAD PRYDE, BUT THESE PUNKS MADE ME LOSE HER. THAT'S A MISTAKE THEY'LL NEVER MAKE AGAIN. KEEP AFTER HER, ROCCO; SHE HAS TO BE CLOSE BY. I'LL HEAD BACK TO THE CAR.

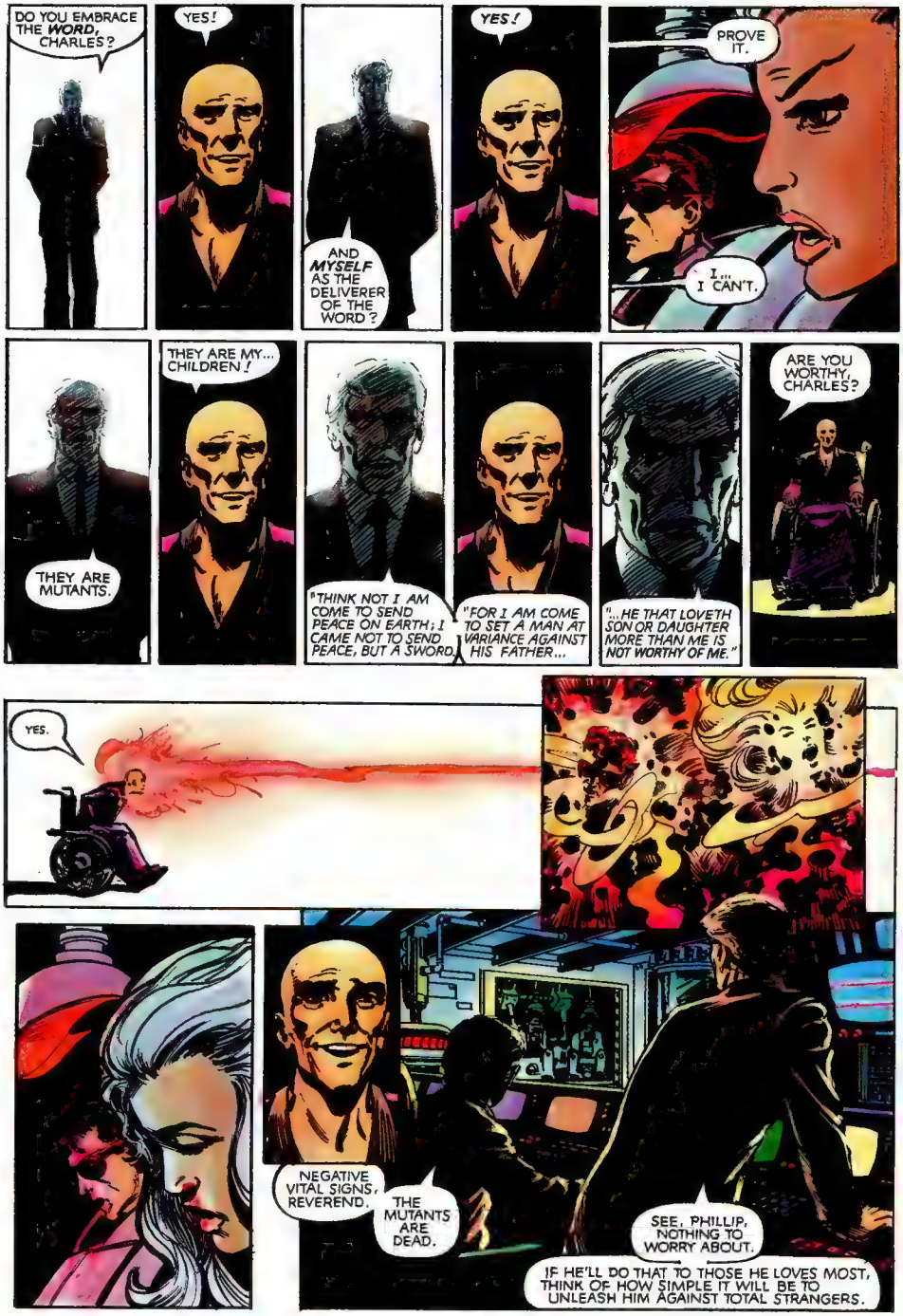

HOWEVER, WHILE THE SKIRMISH RAGED...
RATS!!
AN ALLEY! THANK GOODNESS--AND THE COAST IS CLEAR.
RUSHER STREET. THAT TELLS ME WHERE I AM, FOR ALL THE GOOD THAT DOES. I WISH I HAD A MAP.
A STORE--A BODEGA, A SPANISH DELICATESSEN! MY LUCK'S IMPROVING!
CAREFUL. WOLVERINE SAYS THERE'S NO SUCH ANIMAL.
POOP ON YOU, LOGAN--LUCK EXISTS! AND IT'S FINALLY BREAKING MY WAY!
A PHONE!
SORRY ABOUT THIS, MA BELL--I WOULDN'T DO THIS IF IT WEREN'T AN EMERGENCY. I'LL PAY YOU BACK, TOO, HONEST!
BRRING
C'MON, ANSWER!
BRRING
BRRING
BRRING
BE HOME, SOMEONE, ANYONE!
DON'T DO THIS TO ME!
ANSWER THE DAMN' PHONE!
BRR...KLK!
XAVIER'S SCHOOL. KURT WAGNER SPEAKING.
FUZZY-ELF, IT'S KITTY! I'M IN A BODEGA, ON RUSHER STREET NEAR COLSON, IN THE BRONX--I'M IN TROUBLE!
BWHOOM!

I PHASED--
--JUST IN TIME!
KOFF! KOFF! KOFF!
SMOKE IN MY LUNGS--IT HURTS TO BREATHE--OK, CRIPES, THEY'VE SPOTTED ME!
ROCCO, OUR BULLETS'RE PASSIN' RIGHT THROUGH HER! WHAT'LL WE DO?!
THE "EL!" THE TOKEN BOOTH CLERK CAN HELP ME!
NO--I CAN'T INVOLVE HIM. THE PURIFIERS WANT ME SO BADLY, THEY MAY KILL ANYONE WHO GETS IN THEIR WAY.
THERE'S A TRAIN IN THE STATION! IF I CAN REACH IT--!
IT'S ROLLING--I'VE GOT TO RUN!
USING MY PHASING POWER TO "WALK" ON AIR ISN'T EASY AT THE BEST OF TIMES. THE SLIGHTEST LAPSE IN CONCENTRATION, AN' I'LL BE SPLAT ALL OVER THE SIDEWALK. BUT I CAN'T MAINTAIN THIS PACE MUCH LONGER!
MADE IT!
HOLY--!
SAINTS PRESERVE US!
WHO YELLED?
SHE CAME THROUGH THE WALL LIKE A GHOST!
GIMME A BREAK.
YOU OKAY, HONEY?
LEMME...CATCH... MY BREATH...
MEN... CHASING ME... TRYING TO KILL ME...
DON'T BE SCARED. YOU'RE SAFE HERE--
HEY!
IT'S THEM!
CRASH!
BEHIND ME, KID! I'LL PROTECT YOU!
STAND ASIDE, PEOPLE, YOU WON'T GET HURT.
IT'S THE BRAT WE WANT.


I'M TOO TIRED TO PHASE, AND THAT PURIFIER KNOWS IT. BESIDES, I CAN'T-- I WON'T-- LEAVE THE POLICEMAN.
DO WHAT YOU WANT TO ME, BUT, PLEASE, HELP THE OFFICER! HE ISN'T A MUTANT-- HE'S NOT YOUR ENEMY-- HE'S DYING!
AND HIS DEATH, MUTIE-- AT WHAT'LL APPEAR TO BE YOUR HAND-- WILL SERVE OUR CAUSE AS EFFECTIVELY AS, YOUR DEATH.
LAY DOWN YOUR WEAPONS, PURIFIERS, AND SURRENDER--
--OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES.
LOOK! OUT THE WINDOW!
WE'RE FLYING!
IT'S ANOTHER MUTIE! WASTE HIM!
FOOLS, YOU CAN NO MORE HARM THE MASTER OF MAGNETISM THAN YOU-- OR YOUR LEADER -- CAN ESCAPE HIS WRATH!
USING HIS POWERS...
...MAGNETO EASILY DEFLECTS BOTH BULLETS AND ENERGY BOLTS.
THE PURIFIERS, UNDAUNTED, KEEP FIRING...
...FOR AS LONG AS THEY HAVE WEAPONS LEFT TO FIRE.

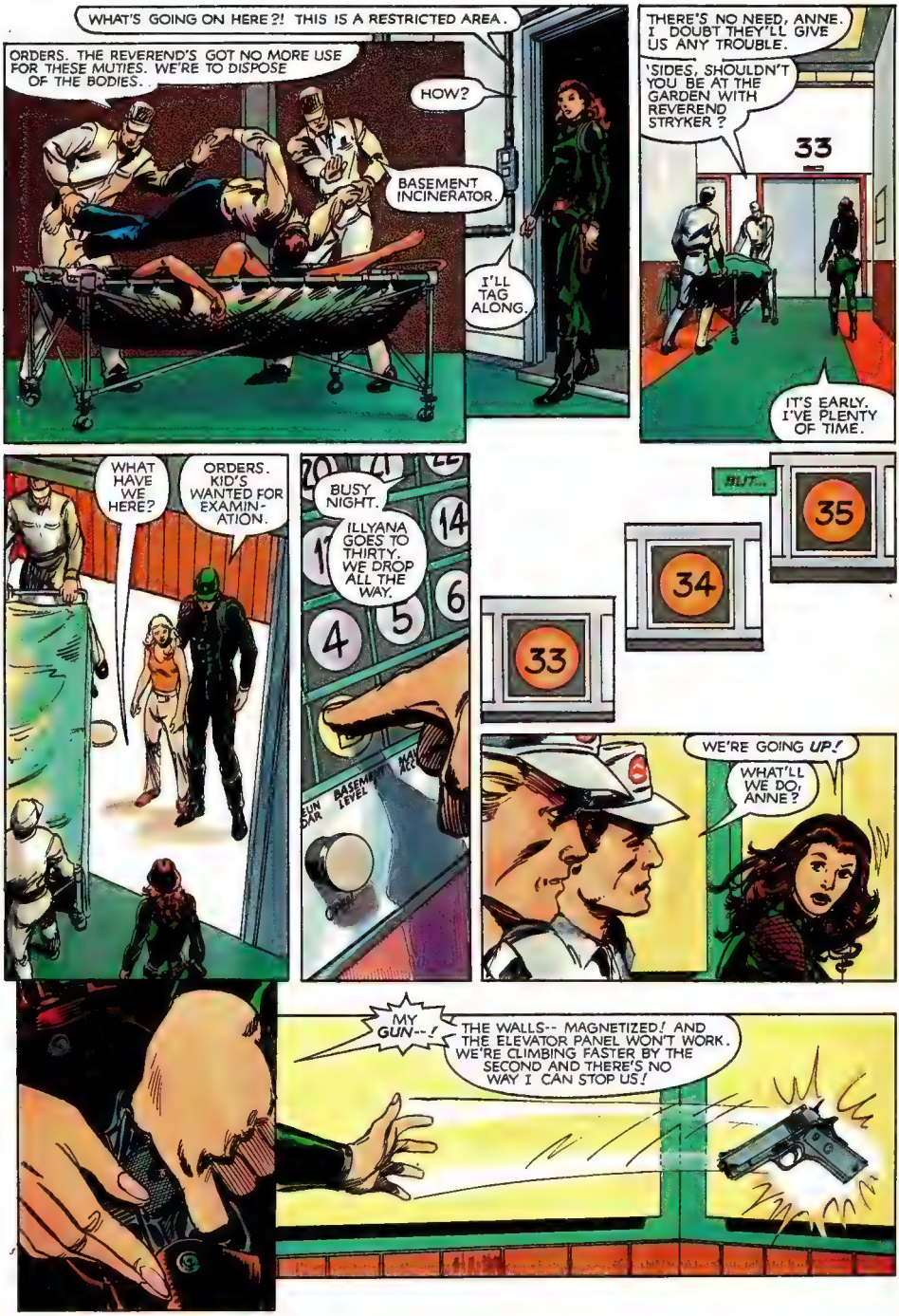
OUR APOLOGIES, KATZCHEN, FOR NOT ARRIVING SOONER.
GLAD T' SEE YOU LEFT SOME O' THE OPPOSITION...
...FER US!
YOU PURIFIERS SEEM MOST FORMIDABLE...
...AGAINST THOSE WHO CANNOT FIGHT BACK!
SAY GOODBYE, ASSASSIN.
BAM!
MAGNETO-- SIDING WITH THE X-MEN?!
COLOSSUS--GUYS-- THE OFFICER'S BEEN SHOT! FORGET THE PURIFIERS-- WE HAVE TO HELP HIM!
CALM YOURSELF, CHILD.
THE BULLET IS STEEL-JACKETED.
MY POWERS CAN EASILY DRAW IT FROM HIS BODY.
HIS CONDITION IS STILL CRITICAL. IF HE IS TO SURVIVE, WE MUST GET HIM TO A HOSPITAL.
ELF! WHERE'D YOU 'PORT TO, PARTNER?!
RIKER'S ISLAND PRISON.


LEAVING THE REMAINING PURIFIERS FOR THE POLICE...
... AND SOARS DOWNTOWN ACROSS THE CITY.
WHO... WERE THOSE GUYS? HELL, WHO ARE YOU?!
WHY WERE THEY AFTER THE KID?
I AM MAGNETO. MY COMPANIONS, X-MEN. WE ARE MUTANTS. AS FOR REASONS, YOU'D BEST ASK THE MAN THOSE ASSASSINS ARE SWORN TO SERVE...
... REVEREND WILLIAM STRYKER.
... MAGNETO TRANSFORMS A CHUNK OF WRECKAGE INTO A MAKESHIFT "FLYING CARPET..."
MEANWHILE...
CHARLES XAVIER...
...YOU WHO ARE LOST -- WHO WANDER IN THE WILDERNESS -- WOULD YOU BE FOUND?
YES.
"VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO THEE, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD.
"...GOD SENT NOT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN THE WORLD...
"... BUT THAT THE WORLD THROUGH HIM MIGHT BE SAVED.
"HE THAT BELIEVETH IN HIM IS NOT CONDEMNED.
"... BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT IS CONDEMNED ALREADY."
I...
..BELIEVE


DO YOU EMBRACE THE WORD, CHARLES?
YES!
AND MYSELF AS THE DELIVERER OF THE WORD?
YES!
PROVE IT.
I... I CAN'T.
THEY ARE MUTANTS.
THEY ARE MY... CHILDREN!
"THINK NOT I AM COME TO SEND PEACE ON EARTH; I CAME NOT TO SEND PEACE, BUT A SWORD.
"FOR I AM COME TO SET A MAN AT VARIANCE AGAINST HIS FATHER...
"...HE THAT LOVETH SON OR DAUGHTER MORE THAN ME IS NOT WORTHY OF ME."
ARE YOU WORTHY, CHARLES?
YES.
NEGATIVE VITAL SIGNS, REVEREND.
THE MUTANTS ARE DEAD.
SEE, PHILLIP, NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
IF HE'LL DO THAT TO THOSE HE LOVES MOST, THINK OF HOW SIMPLE IT WILL BE TO UNLEASH HIM AGAINST TOTAL STRANGERS.

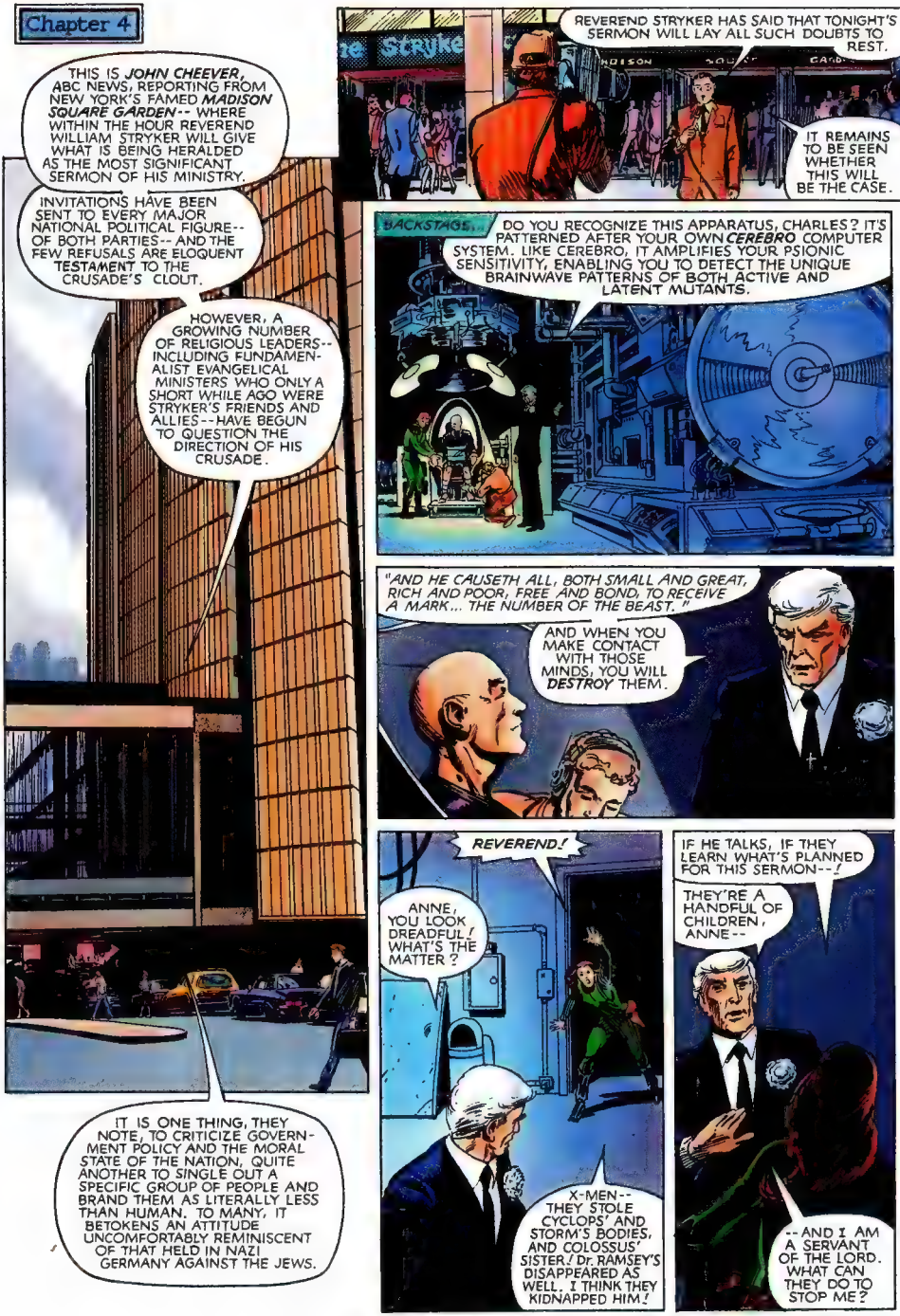
WHERE TO, Dr. RAMSEY?
HOME, GEORGE, FOR A SHOWER, SHAVE, CHANGE OF CLOTHES, AND A DECENT MEAL.
AN HOUR SHOULD DO THE TRICK. THEN, I'LL NEED YOU TO DRIVE ME TO THE GARDEN FOR TONIGHT'S RALLY.
NO PROBLEM. IT SOUNDS LIKE A PRETTY BIG SHINDIG--IS IT TRUE THE PRESIDENT'S GOING TO BE THERE?
WOULD YOU LIKE HIS AUTOGRAPH?
THAT'D BE GREAT, DOC. THANKS.
BUT, AS THE LIMOUSINE ACCELERATES DOWN THE STREET...
SURPRISE, SUCKER!
!?!
Uh-UH, HEAD-SHRINKER NOT A PEEP.
MMMPHGH!
WE'RE LEAVING AS SILENTLY AS WE ARRIVED.
I'M DOING IT!
BY MAINTAINING PHYSICAL CONTACT...
... I ACTUALLY PHASED ANOTHER BODY WITH ME!
I'VE PRACTICED PHASING LARGISH MASSES IN THE DANGER ROOM, BUT I NEVER PHASED A PERSON BEFORE, I NEVER HAD TO...
... AND I'VE NEVER FELT SO BEAT--
--HEY!
GET AWAY FROM ME!
WAIT--YOU'RE THE PRYDE GIRL. BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD--
URRRGH!

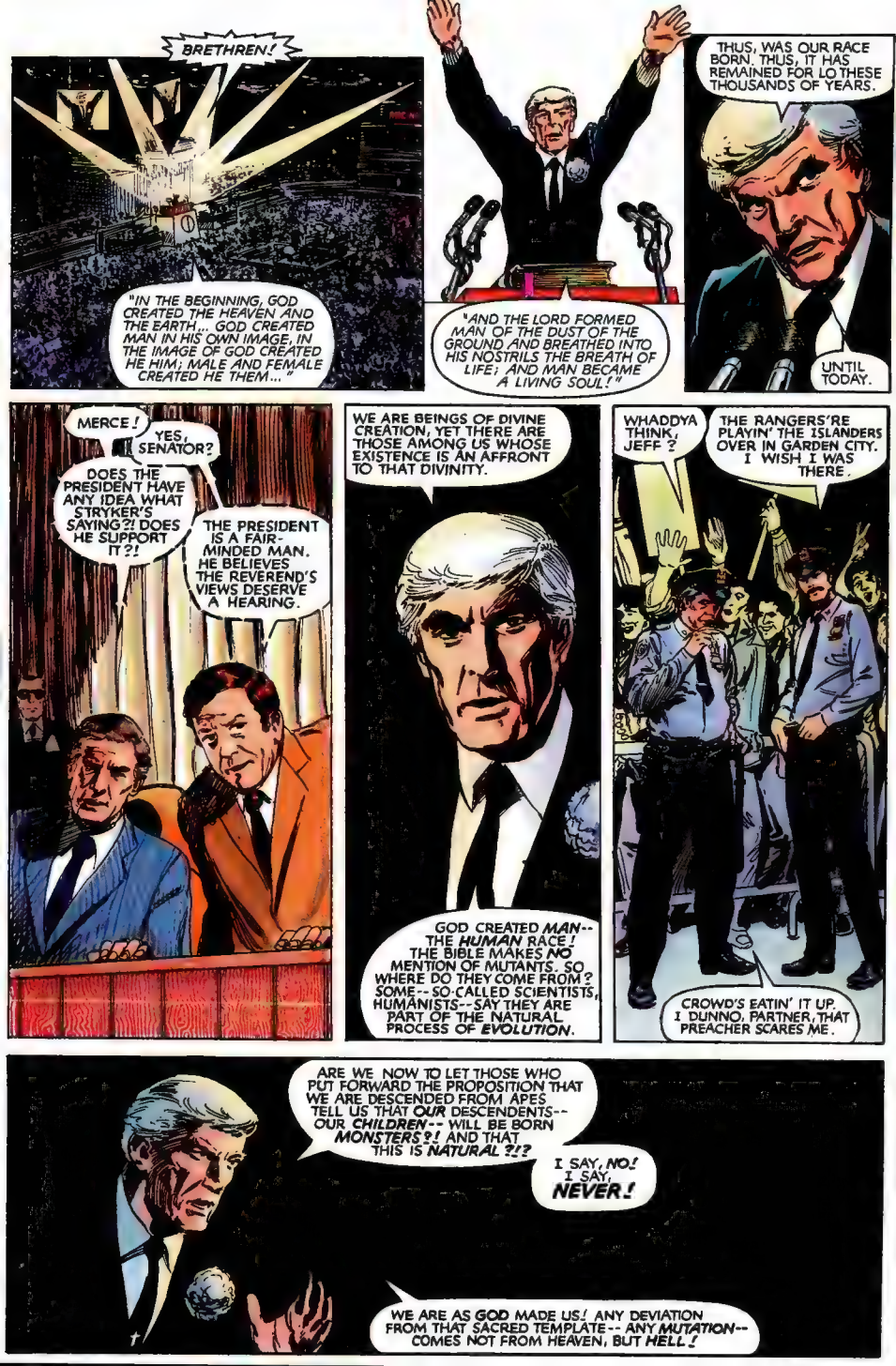
IF KITTY'S CONCENTRATION HAD SLIPPED EVEN A LITTLE, SHE WOULD HAVE SUFFERED A HORRIBLE DEATH --ACH! THE CHILD IS BRAVE.
SHE HAS NINE LIVES, HERR DOKTOR, DIDN'T YOU KNOW?
PUT ME DOWN!
YOU'RE--CHOKING ME!
SUFFOCATION IS THE LEAST OF YOUR PROBLEMS.
WE REQUIRE INFORMATION.
NEVER!
I WAS HOPING YOU'D SAY THAT.
WE HAVE WAYS OF MAKING YOU TALK.
BUT MANY MORE OF MAKING YOU DIE.
THIS IS A MOMENT I'VE LONG LOOKED FORWARD TO.
NO--PLEASE!
YOU KNOW WHAT I WANT.
MY PATIENCE IS WEARING THIN.
THE STRYKER BUILDING...
...SOMETIME LATER...

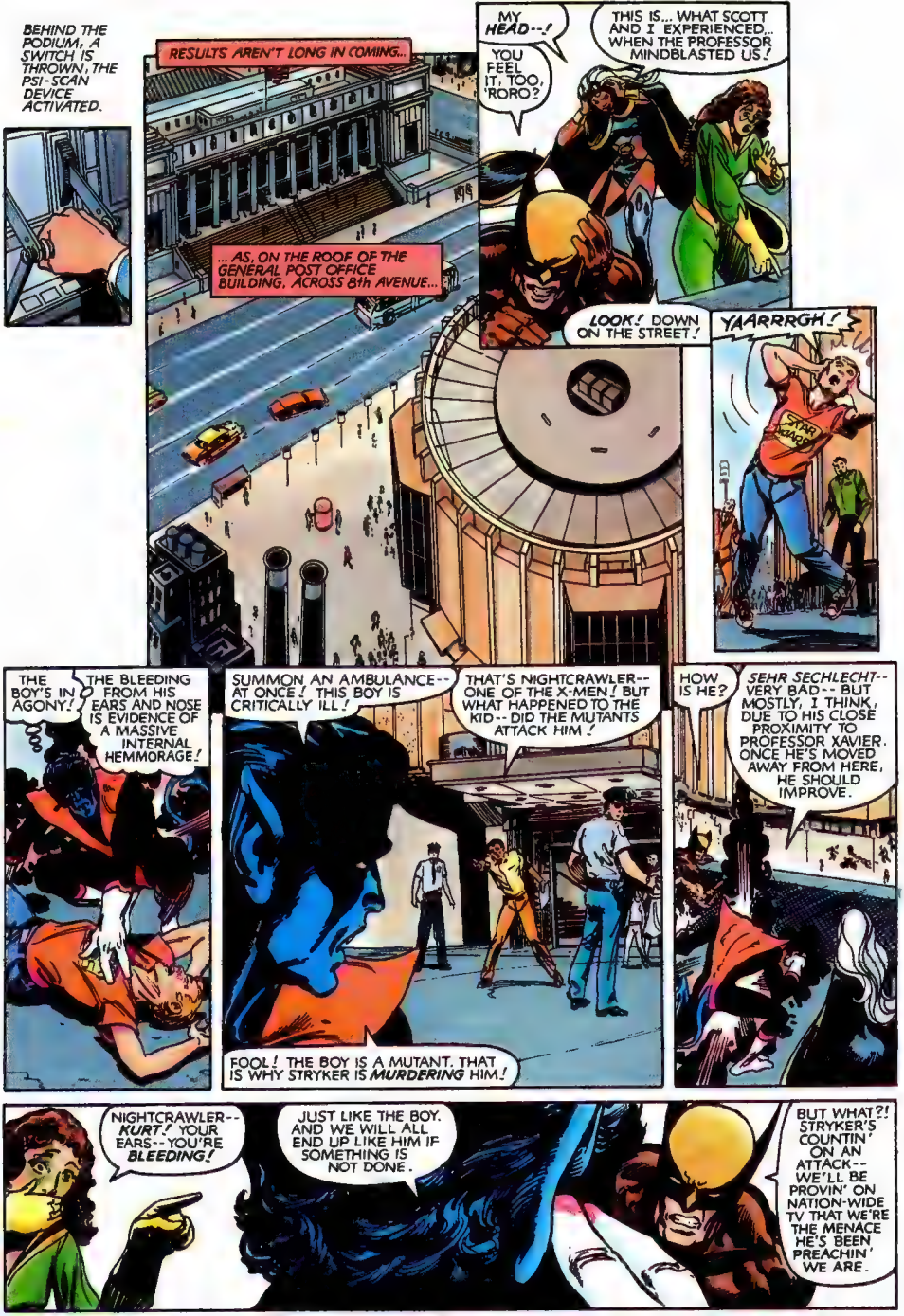

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?! THIS IS A RESTRICTED AREA.
ORDERS. THE REVEREND'S GOT NO MORE USE FOR THESE MUTIES. WE'RE TO DISPOSE OF THE BODIES.
HOW?
BASEMENT INCINERATOR.
I'LL TAG ALONG.
THERE'S NO NEED, ANNE. I DOUBT THEY'LL GIVE US ANY TROUBLE.
'SIDES, SHOULDN'T YOU BE AT THE GARDEN WITH REVEREND STRYKER?
33
IT'S EARLY. I'VE PLENTY OF TIME.
WHAT HAVE WE HERE?
ORDERS. KID'S WANTED FOR EXAMIN-ATION.
BUSY NIGHT.
ILLYANA GOES TO THIRTY. WE DROP ALL THE WAY.
BASEMENT LEVEL
33
34
BUT...
35
WE'RE GOING UP!
WHAT'LL WE DO, ANNE?
MY GUN--!
THE WALLS-- MAGNETIZED! AND THE ELEVATOR PANEL WON'T WORK. WE'RE CLIMBING FASTER BY THE SECOND AND THERE'S NO WAY I CAN STOP US!

ALONE AND UNARMED, I'M NO MATCH FOR THE X-MEN. I HAVE TO FIND A WAY OUT, TO WARN THE REVEREND!
IF ONLY I CAN LEVER THESE BLASTED DOORS--
--OPEN!
WITHOUT HESITATION, ANNE LEAPS FOR THE ROOFTOP...
...TRYING NOT TO THINK OF THE SIX HUNDRED FOOT SHEER DROP AWAITING HER SHOULD SHE MISS.
THEY'RE LEAVING.
THEY GOT WHAT THEY CAME FOR.
THEY MUST NOT CONSIDER ME...
...WORTH BOTHERING ABOUT.
THAT MISTAKE'LL COST THEM. DEARLY.
ELSEWHERE...
AS I FEARED...
...WE ARE TOO LATE.
< PIOTR NIKOLIEVITCH! >*
< I KNEW YOU'D COME! >
THERE MUST BE SOME MISTAKE! THEY CAN'T BE DEAD!
*TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN -- L.
RELAX, PUN'KIN. THEY AREN'T.
WOLVERINE, THE DOCTOR...
...IS AN IDIOT! HE BELIEVES HIS FLAMIN' MACHINES. I SAY THEY'RE WRONG. MY SENSES TELL ME SCOTT-'N'-RORO ARE ALIVE...
...IN SOME KIND'A STASIS. A HEFTY JOLT OF ELECTRICITY MIGHT REVIVE 'EM.

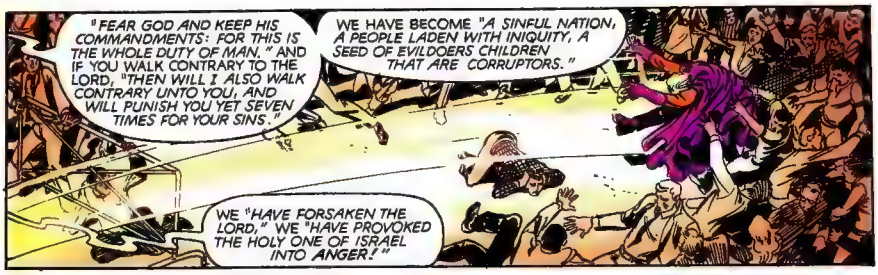
IT'S WORTH A TRY.
WE CERTAINLY HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE.
UHHNNN...
FASCINATING. CHARLES MUST HAVE BEEN RESISTING STRYKER'S PROGRAMMING ON SOME DEEP SUBCONSCIOUS LEVEL. HE COULD NOT KILL THESE TWO-- NO MATTER HOW MUCH HE BELIEVED HE SHOULD.
INSTEAD, HE REDUCED THEIR METABOLIC LEVELS TO THE BAREST MINIMUM, CREATING THE ILLUSION OF DEATH.
MAGNETO--?!?
HE SAVED YOUR LIVES, SCOTT
WHAT?! WHY?!!
CONSIDERING OUR PAST ASSOCIATION, YOUR REACTION IS UNDERSTANDABLE.
I AM NOT YOUR ENEMY, X-MEN, NOR DO I CONSIDER YOU MINE. TRUE, MY GOAL HAS EVER BEEN THE CONQUEST OF EARTH-- BUT SOLELY TO CREATE A WORLD WHERE OUR RACE, HOMO SUPERIOR, CAN LIVE IN PEACE.
IS YOUR WAY ANY BETTER? A MUTANT DICTATORSHIP?
DO NOT TAKE THAT TONE WITH ME, BOY. I HAVE LIVED UNDER A DICTATORSHIP...
...AND SEEN MY FAMILY BUTCHERED BY ITS SERVANTS. WHEN I RULE, IT WILL BE FOR THE BETTERMENT OF ALL.
LOOK AT YOURSELVES, RISKING YOUR LIVES FOR A HUMANITY THAT WOULD RATHER SEE YOU BEHIND BARS, OR DEAD. WHY DO YOU PERSIST?
CONTENTMENT BREEDS TRANQUILITY-- DISCONTENT, REBELLION. THEREFORE, I SHALL ENSURE THE ONE BY ELIMINATING THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE OTHER: HUNGER, POVERTY, DISEASE, WAR.
THE FREEDOMS LOST WILL NOT BE NOTICED, EVEN IN THE MOST LIBERTARIAN OF STATES. AND THE MATERIAL BENEFITS SHOULD MORE THAN BALANCE THE SCALES.
ANYONE CAN CREATE AN UTOPIA FOR A SINGLE GENERATION, MAGNETO; THE TRICK IS MAKING IT LAST. WHO PRESERVES YOUR DREAM AFTER YOU'RE GONE?
YOU, OF COURSE, CYCLOPS. AND THE X-MEN. WHY DO YOU THINK I WANT YOU BY MY SIDE?
BUT ALL THIS MAY WELL BE RENDERED ACADEMIC IF REVEREND STRYKER'S PLANS ARE LEFT UNCHECKED. CONSIDER MY OFFER, X-MEN. SHOULD THE FATES BE KIND, WE SHALL SPEAK OF IT AGAIN.


Chapter 4
THIS IS JOHN CHEEVER, ABC NEWS, REPORTING FROM NEW YORK'S FAMED MADISON SQUARE GARDEN-- WHERE WITHIN THE HOUR REVEREND WILLIAM STRYKER WILL GIVE WHAT IS BEING HERALDED AS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT SERMON OF HIS MINISTRY.
INVITATIONS HAVE BEEN SENT TO EVERY MAJOR NATIONAL POLITICAL FIGURE-- OF BOTH PARTIES-- AND THE FEW REFUSALS ARE ELOQUENT TESTAMENT TO THE CRUSADE'S CLOUT.
HOWEVER, A GROWING NUMBER OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS-- INCLUDING FUNDAMENALIST EVANGELICAL MINISTERS WHO ONLY A SHORT WHILE AGO WERE STRYKER'S FRIENDS AND ALLIES--HAVE BEGUN TO QUESTION THE DIRECTION OF HIS CRUSADE.
IT IS ONE THING, THEY NOTE, TO CRITICIZE GOVERNMENT POLICY AND THE MORAL STATE OF THE NATION, QUITE ANOTHER TO SINGLE OUT A SPECIFIC GROUP OF PEOPLE AND BRAND THEM AS LITERALLY LESS THAN HUMAN. TO MANY, IT BETOKENS AN ATTITUDE UNCOMFORTABLY REMINISCENT OF THAT HELD IN NAZI GERMANY AGAINST THE JEWS.
REVEREND STRYKER HAS SAID THAT TONIGHT'S SERMON WILL LAY ALL SUCH DOUBTS TO REST.
IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THIS WILL BE THE CASE.
BACKSTAGE...
DO YOU RECOGNIZE THIS APPARATUS, CHARLES? IT'S PATTERNED AFTER YOUR OWN CEREBRO COMPUTER SYSTEM. LIKE CEREBRO, IT AMPLIFIES YOUR PSIONIC SENSITIVITY, ENABLING YOU TO DETECT THE UNIQUE BRAINWAVE PATTERNS OF BOTH ACTIVE AND LATENT MUTANTS.
"AND HE CAUSETH ALL, BOTH SMALL AND GREAT, RICH AND POOR, FREE AND BOND, TO RECEIVE A MARK... THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST."
AND WHEN YOU MAKE CONTACT WITH THOSE MINDS, YOU WILL DESTROY THEM.
REVEREND!
ANNE, YOU LOOK DREADFUL! WHAT'S THE MATTER?
X-MEN-- THEY STOLE CYCLOPS' AND STORM'S BODIES, AND COLOSSUS' SISTER! Dr. RAMSEY'S DISAPPEARED AS WELL. I THINK THEY KIDNAPPED HIM!
IF HE TALKS, IF THEY LEARN WHAT'S PLANNED FOR THIS SERMON--!
THEY'RE A HANDFUL OF CHILDREN, ANNE--
--AND I AM A SERVANT OF THE LORD. WHAT CAN THEY DO TO STOP ME?


BRETHREN!
"IN THE BEGINNING, GOD CREATED THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH... GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD CREATED HE HIM; MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM..."
"AND THE LORD FORMED MAN OF THE DUST OF THE GROUND AND BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE; AND MAN BECAME A LIVING SOUL!"
THUS, WAS OUR RACE BORN. THUS, IT HAS REMAINED FOR LO THESE THOUSANDS OF YEARS.
UNTIL TODAY.
MERCE!
YES, SENATOR?
DOES THE PRESIDENT HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT STRYKER'S SAYING?! DOES HE SUPPORT IT?!
THE PRESIDENT IS A FAIR-MINDED MAN. HE BELIEVES THE REVEREND'S VIEWS DESERVE A HEARING.
WE ARE BEINGS OF DIVINE CREATION, YET THERE ARE THOSE AMONG US WHOSE EXISTENCE IS AN AFFRONT TO THAT DIVINITY.
GOD CREATED MAN-- THE HUMAN RACE! THE BIBLE MAKES NO MENTION OF MUTANTS. SO WHERE DO THEY COME FROM? SOME-- SO-CALLED SCIENTISTS, HUMANISTS-- SAY THEY ARE PART OF THE NATURAL PROCESS OF EVOLUTION.
WHADDYA THINK, JEFF?
THE RANGERS'RE PLAYIN' THE ISLANDERS OVER IN GARDEN CITY. I WISH I WAS THERE.
CROWD'S EATIN' IT UP. I DUNNO, PARTNER, THAT PREACHER SCARES ME.
ARE WE NOW TO LET THOSE WHO PUT FORWARD THE PROPOSITION THAT WE ARE DESCENDED FROM APES TELL US THAT OUR DESCENDENTS-- OUR CHILDREN-- WILL BE BORN MONSTERS?! AND THAT THIS IS NATURAL?!?
I SAY, NO! I SAY, NEVER!
WE ARE AS GOD MADE US! ANY DEVIATION FROM THAT SACRED TEMPLATE-- ANY MUTATION-- COMES NOT FROM HEAVEN, BUT HELL!


BEHIND THE PODIUM, A SWITCH IS THROWN, THE PSI-SCAN DEVICE ACTIVATED.
RESULTS AREN'T LONG IN COMING...
... AS, ON THE ROOF OF THE GENERAL POST OFFICE BUILDING, ACROSS 8th AVENUE...
MY HEAD--!
YOU FEEL IT, TOO, 'RORO?
THIS IS... WHAT SCOTT AND I EXPERIENCED... WHEN THE PROFESSOR MINDBLASTED US!
LOOK! DOWN ON THE STREET!
YAARRRGH!
STAR WARS
THE BOY'S IN AGONY!
THE BLEEDING FROM HIS EARS AND NOSE IS EVIDENCE OF A MASSIVE INTERNAL HEMMORAGE!
SUMMON AN AMBULANCE-- AT ONCE! THIS BOY IS CRITICALLY ILL!
THAT'S NIGHTCRAWLER-- ONE OF THE X-MEN! BUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE KID-- DID THE MUTANTS ATTACK HIM!
FOOL! THE BOY IS A MUTANT. THAT IS WHY STRYKER IS MURDERING HIM!
HOW IS HE?
SEHR SECHLECHT-- VERY BAD-- BUT MOSTLY, I THINK, DUE TO HIS CLOSE PROXIMITY TO PROFESSOR XAVIER. ONCE HE'S MOVED AWAY FROM HERE, HE SHOULD IMPROVE.
NIGHTCRAWLER-- KURT! YOUR EARS-- YOU'RE BLEEDING!
JUST LIKE THE BOY. AND WE WILL ALL END UP LIKE HIM IF SOMETHING IS NOT DONE.
BUT WHAT?! STRYKER'S COUNTIN' ON AN ATTACK-- WE'LL BE PROVIN' ON NATION-WIDE TV THAT WE'RE THE MENACE HE'S BEEN PREACHIN' WE ARE.

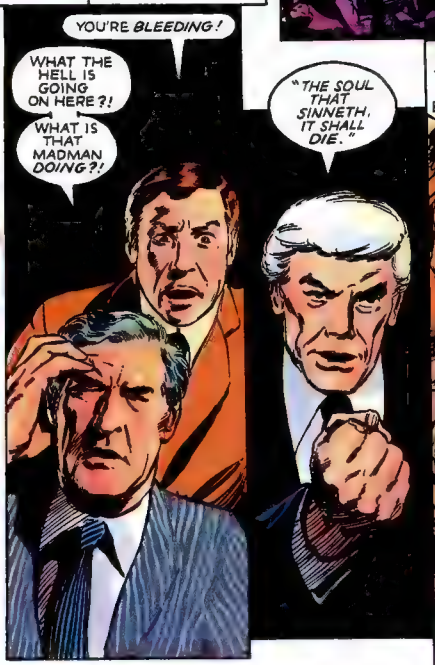
HOWEVER, AS THE X-MEN ARE GRIPPED BY A MOMENT OF FATAL INDECISION, MAGNETO TAKES MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS.
STRYKER!
SINCE YOU HAVE PROCLAIMED ARMAGEDDON FOR HOMO SAPIENS AND HOMO SUPERIOR, IT SEEMS ONLY FITTING THAT YOU MEET YOUR CHIEF ADVERSARY FACE TO FACE.
ABC NEWS
CBS NEWS
"AND I BEHELD ANOTHER BEAST... AND HE HAD TWO HORNS LIKE A GOAT, AND HE SPOKE AS A DRAGON. AND HE HAD POWER TO... CAUSE THAT AS MANY AS WOULD NOT WORSHIP THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST SHOULD BE KILLED."
BEHOLD--MAGNETO! MOST FEARED OF A FEARSOME RACE, SELF-STYLED OVERLORD OF EARTH, ENSLAVER OF ITS PEOPLE!
SENATOR, WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!
NO, DAMMIT! SEE--MAGNETO'S REPLACED THE ROOF, GOOD AS NEW! HE'S MADE AN ENTRANCE, NOT AN ATTACK!
BUT LISTEN, MERCE--TO WHAT STRYKER'S SAYING! THAT'S THE REAL DANGER!
BUT FIRE SHALL COME FROM GOD OUT OF HEAVEN TO DEVOUR HIM. THE DEVIL SHALL BE CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE, TO BE "TORMENTED DAY AND NIGHT, FOR EVER AND EVER!"
ON CUE, THE PSI-SCAN DEVICE IS REPROGRAMMED, REFOCUSED, EVERY IOTA OF XAVIER'S POWER CONCENTRATED INTO AN AWESOME BEAM OF ENERGY...
...DIRECTED AT MAGNETO.
HIS SHIELDS--HIS NATURAL PSYCHIC DEFENSES--HOLD, BARELY.


"FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: FOR THIS IS THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN." AND IF YOU WALK CONTRARY TO THE LORD, "THEN WILL I ALSO WALK CONTRARY UNTO YOU, AND WILL PUNISH YOU YET SEVEN TIMES FOR YOUR SINS."
WE HAVE BECOME "A SINFUL NATION, A PEOPLE LADEN WITH INIQUITY, A SEED OF EVILDOERS CHILDREN THAT ARE CORRUPTORS."
WE "HAVE FORSAKEN THE LORD," WE "HAVE PROVOKED THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL INTO ANGER!"

WE HAVE SINNED. AND MUST ATONE FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS...
...WITH BLOOD!
I UNDERESTIMATED CHARLES. IN THE PAST, HE ALWAYS HELD BACK--FOR FEAR HE MIGHT HARM HIS FOE. NOT SO, TONIGHT. I CANNOT SURVIVE ANOTHER SUCH PSIBOLT.
I HAVE NEVER FELT SO DRAINED OF STRENGTH. I FEAR I AM TOO WEAK TO EVEN STAND.

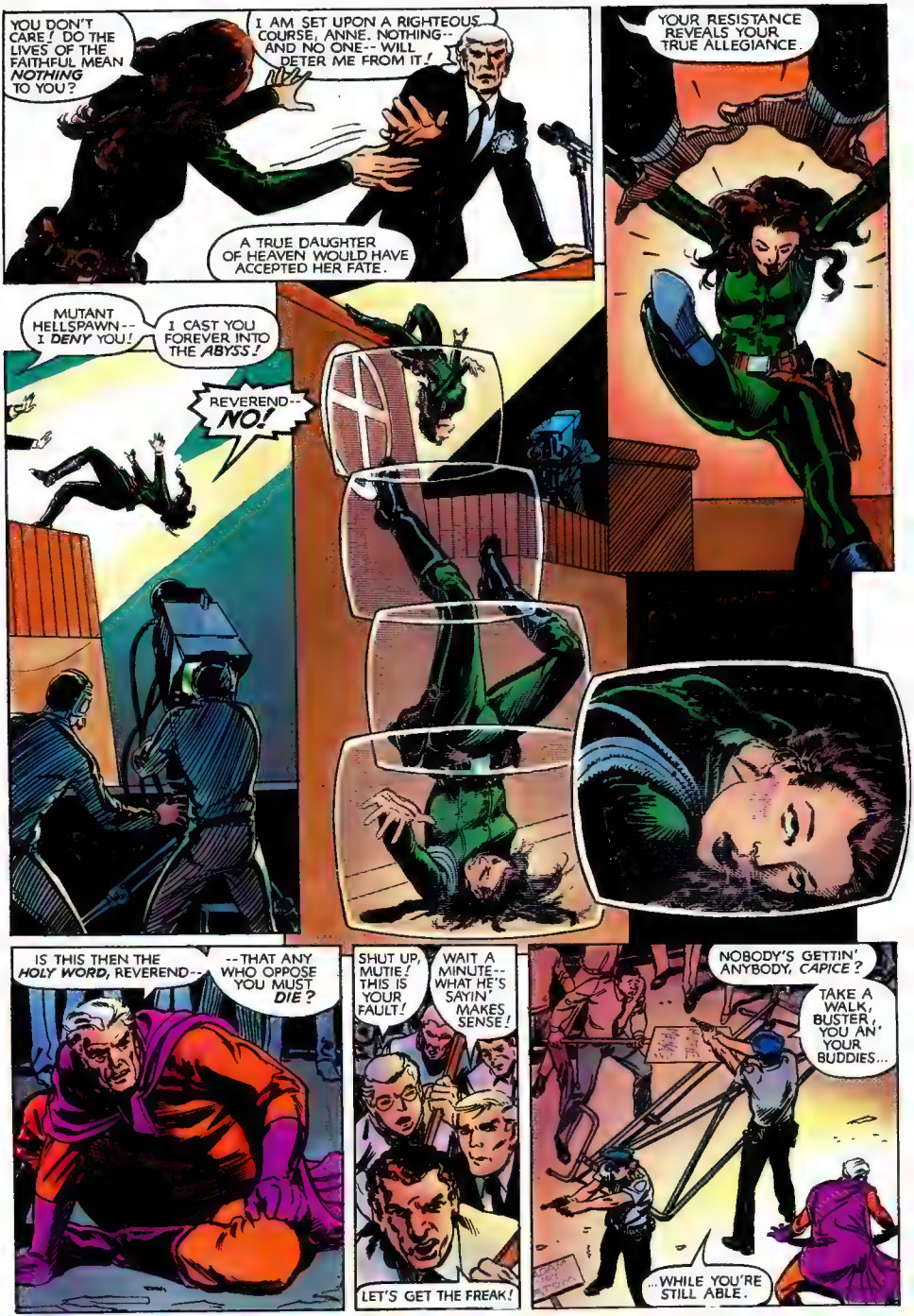
BUT ENOUGH OF MY POWER REMAINS TO FORCE THIS RABBLE BACK, A LAST, DEFIANT GESTURE--FOR THAT IS ALL IT IS--
--I CANNOT HOLD THEM LONG.

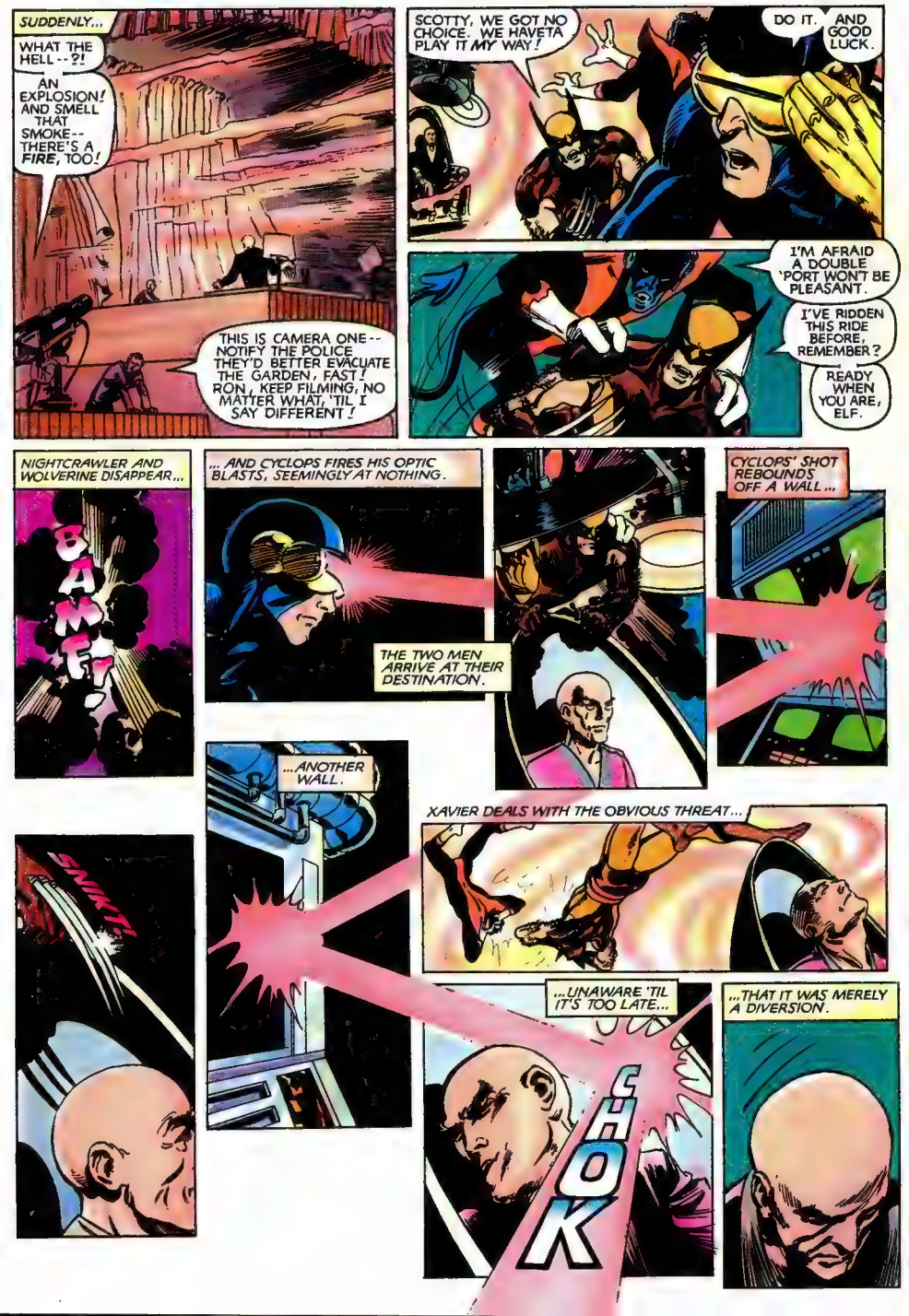
THEY'RE GOING TO KILL HIM--THIS IS INSANE!
STRYKER'S GONE TOO FAR! BAD ENOUGH HE CLAIMS MUTANTS--AS A RACE--ARE EVIL, BUT TO CALL FOR THEIR SUMMARY EXECUTION?!
SENATOR--


YOU'RE BLEEDING!
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?!
WHAT IS THAT MADMAN DOING?!
"THE SOUL THAT SINNETH, IT SHALL DIE."

NOT IF I CAN HELP IT, BUSTER!
BACK OFF YOU PEOPLE!
THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A CHURCH SERVICE, NOT A DAMN CIRCUS! LEAVE THE MAN BE!

MEANWHILE, OUT OF SIGHT OF THE CROWD...
MUTIES!
H-HEY--!?!
WHILE MAGNETO HOLDS EVERYONE'S ATTENTION ON-STAGE, SCOTT FIGURES WE CAN SLIP IN, GRAB THE PROFESSOR AND GET AWAY-- HOPEFULLY BEFORE TOO MUCH HARM IS DONE.
THAT CREEPY DOC SAID SOME KIND OF DEVICE IS HYPING THE PROFESSOR'S POWERS. IF I CAN PHASE THROUGH IT, I'LL SHORT-CIRCUIT ITS SYSTEMS...
WHUNFF!
SO MUCH FOR THAT IDEA-- THE PROFESSOR SENSED ME COMING, BLOCKED ME WITH A MINDBLAST!
THE BATTLE IS QUICKLY JOINED IN EARNEST. ORDINARILY, THE PURIFIERS WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE...
...BUT THIS NEAR ITS SOURCE, XAVIER'S MURDEROUS PSI-BEAM TAKES A TERRIBLE TOLL. THE X-MEN ARE LITERALLY DYING ON THEIR FEET.
THEY HAVE PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME TO STOP THEIR MENTOR.
FOR SOME, THOUGH, IT IS ALREADY TOO LATE.
REVEREND!
THE X-MEN ARE HERE-- TRYING TO FREE XAVIER!
AHHRRR!
ANNE-- WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOU?!
B-BLOOD?!?
THE BEAM'S AFFECTING ME! BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE-- THAT WOULD MEAN I'M A...
MUTANT.
REVEREND-- DEAR GOD! I'VE SERVED YOU FAITHFULLY! WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?!
IT IS GOD'S WILL, CHILD, NOT MY OWN. I AM TRULY SORRY.


YOU DON'T CARE! DO THE LIVES OF THE FAITHFUL MEAN NOTHING TO YOU?
I AM SET UPON A RIGHTEOUS COURSE, ANNE. NOTHING-- AND NO ONE-- WILL DETER ME FROM IT!
A TRUE DAUGHTER OF HEAVEN WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED HER FATE.
YOUR RESISTANCE REVEALS YOUR TRUE ALLEGIANCE.
MUTANT HELLSPAWN-- I DENY YOU!
I CAST YOU FOREVER INTO THE ABYSS!
REVEREND-- NO!
IS THIS THEN THE HOLY WORD, REVEREND--
--THAT ANY WHO OPPOSE YOU MUST DIE?
SHUT UP, MUTIE! THIS IS YOUR FAULT!
WAIT A MINUTE-- WHAT HE'S SAYIN' MAKES SENSE!
LET'S GET THE FREAK!
NOBODY'S GETTIN' ANYBODY, CAPICE?
TAKE A WALK, BUSTER, YOU AN' YOUR BUDDIES...
...WHILE YOU'RE STILL ABLE.


SUDDENLY...
WHAT THE HELL--?!
AN EXPLOSION! AND SMELL THAT SMOKE--THERE'S A FIRE, TOO!
THIS IS CAMERA ONE--NOTIFY THE POLICE THEY'D BETTER EVACUATE THE GARDEN, FAST! RON, KEEP FILMING, NO MATTER WHAT, 'TIL I SAY DIFFERENT!
SCOTTY, WE GOT NO CHOICE. WE HAVETA PLAY IT MY WAY!
DO IT. AND GOOD LUCK.
I'M AFRAID A DOUBLE 'PORT WON'T BE PLEASANT.
I'VE RIDDEN THIS RIDE BEFORE, REMEMBER?
READY WHEN YOU ARE, ELF.
NIGHTCRAWLER AND WOLVERINE DISAPPEAR...
BAMF!
...AND CYCLOPS FIRES HIS OPTIC BLASTS, SEEMINGLY AT NOTHING.
THE TWO MEN ARRIVE AT THEIR DESTINATION.
CYCLOPS' SHOT REBOUNDS OFF A WALL...
...ANOTHER WALL.
XAVIER DEALS WITH THE OBVIOUS THREAT...
SNIKT!
...UNAWARE 'TIL IT'S TOO LATE...
CHOK
...THAT IT WAS MERELY A DIVERSION.

YOU CUT THINGS PRETTY FLAMIN' CLOSE, CYKE. CHARLEY NEARLY NAILED US.
I HAD TO. A MOMENT TOO SOON OR TOO LATE AND HE'D HAVE TELE-PATHICALLY SPOTTED THE PLAN IN MY THOUGHTS AND COUNTERED IT. SAME WITH A DIRECT SHOT.
THE PROFESSOR'S GOOD, BUT HE LACKS OUR COMBAT TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE. I FIGURED HE'D HAVE PROBLEMS DEALING WITH SIMUL-TANEOUS ATTACKS FROM OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS. EITHER YOU OR I WOULD DO THE JOB.
CYKE, YOUR ZAP KAYO'D HIM. MY CLAWS WOULD'A KILLED
I KNOW.
THIS TAKES CARE OF STRYKER'S MACHINE.
THEN IT IS FINISHED. WE HAVE WON.
THE FIGHT'S BARELY BEGUN, PETER.
BUT WITHOUT HIS MACHINE--OR THE PROFESSOR TO POWER IT--STRYKER IS BEATEN. SHOULD WE NOT GO BEFORE HE CAN SUMMON MORE PURIFIERS?
I'M NOT RUNNING.
IT ISN'T THE PURIFIERS WHO ARE DANGEROUS, BUT THE MAN HIMSELF. HIS BELIEFS. HIS IDEAS. IF WE DON'T STAND UP TO THOSE--HERE AND NOW--THEN ALL WE'VE DONE IS DELAY AN INEVITABLE HOLOCAUST.
ONE WAY OR THE OTHER--US OR HIM--IT ENDS TONIGHT.
SOUNDS GOOD T'ME.
AND ME, SCOTT.
COUNT ME IN.
WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

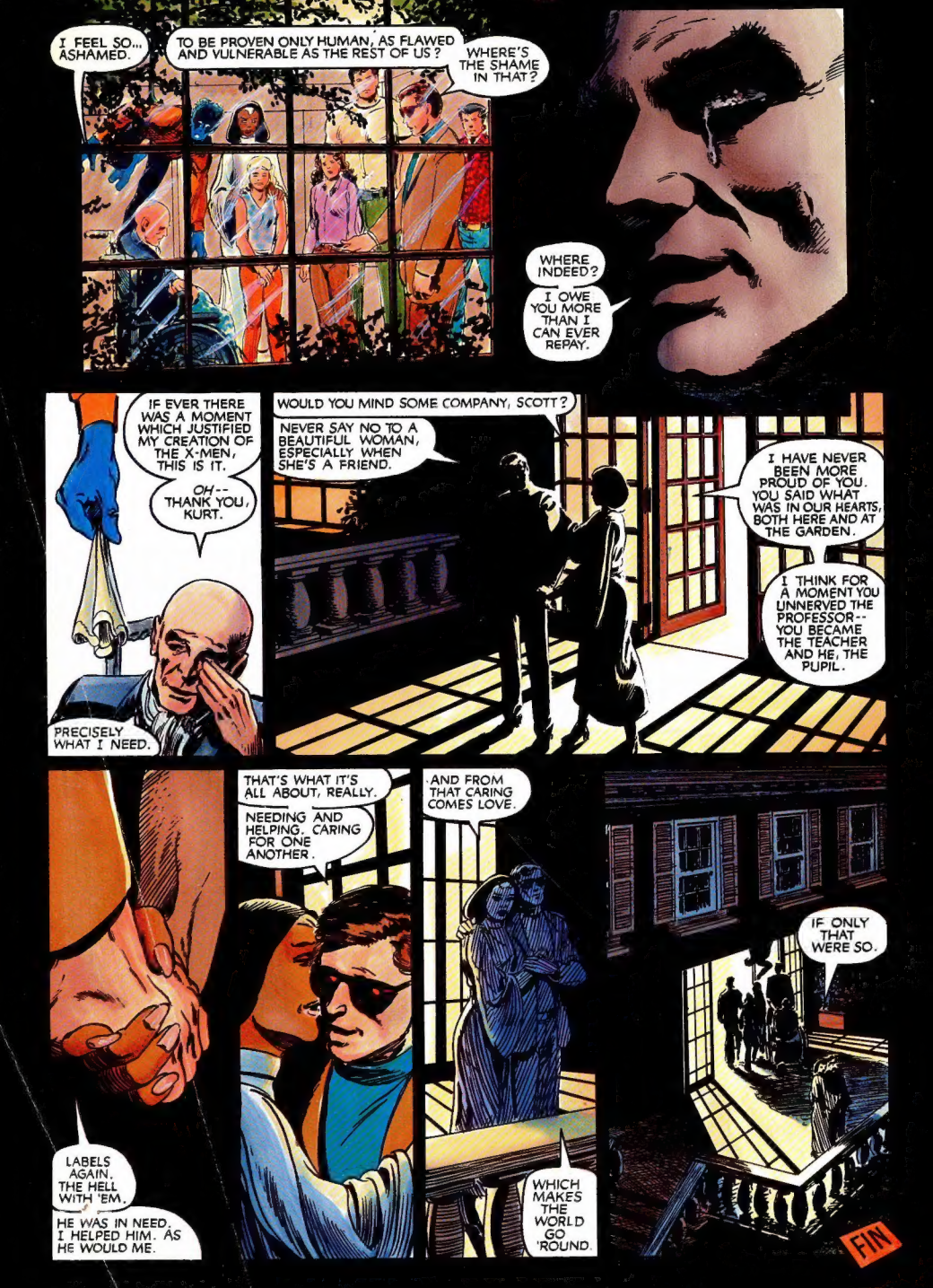
AND SO, AFTER REMOVING PROFESSOR XAVIER TO SAFETY...
LOOK!
THEY'RE CRAZY!
MAYBE, BUT THEY GOT GUTS.
GOOD EVENING, REVEREND.
X-MEN--STORM AND CYCLOPS!
BUT YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE...
DEAD? WE'RE FULL OF SURPRISES, STRYKER, AS YOU'LL SOON SEE.
YOU'VE BEEN MAKING SOME PRETTY EXTREME CHARGES AGAINST US. WE FIGURE WE'D CLAIM EQUAL TIME TO ANSWER THEM. YOU DON'T MIND, DO YOU?
YOUR TOYS ARE BROKEN, REVEREND, YOUR GOONS ARE BEATEN-- IT'S JUST YOUR WORD AGAINST OURS.
THEN I HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR.
YOU'RE A LUCKY MAN. THANKS TO YOU-- AND PEOPLE LIKE YOU-- MUTANTS LIVE IN FEAR EVERY DAY OF OUR LIVES. AND SOMETIMES, THOSE LIVES ARE VERY SHORT. LESS THAN A WEEK AGO, TWO CHILDREN IN CONNECTICUT WERE MURDERED, STRYKER--CONDEMNED SOLELY FOR AN ACCIDENT OF BIRTH.
WOULD YOU DO THAT TO SOMEONE BECAUSE OF THE COLOR OF THEIR SKIN, OR THEIR BELIEFS?
I DO NOTHING, CYCLOPS. I AM AN INSTRUMENT OF THE LORD.
AND WHATEVER A MAN'S COLOR OR BELIEFS, HE IS STILL HUMAN. THOSE CHILDREN-- AND YOU X-MEN-- ARE NOT!
SAYS WHO? YOU? WHAT MAKES YOUR LINK WITH HEAVEN ANY STRONGER THAN MINE?
WE HAVE UNIQUE GIFTS-- BUT NO MORE SO, AND NO MORE SPECIAL, THAN THOSE GRANTED A PHYSICIAN OR PHYSICIST, OR PHILOSOPHER OR ATHLETE. IT COULD BE DUE TO AN ACCIDENT OF NATURE OR DIVINE PROVIDENCE, WHO'S TO SAY?
ARE ARBITRARY LABELS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE WAY WE LIVE OUR LIVES, WHAT WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT WE ACTUALLY ARE?!
FOR ALL YOU KNOW, WE COULD BE THE REAL HUMAN RACE...
...AND THE REST OF YOU, THE MUTANTS.
HUMAN?!
YOU DARE CALL THAT... THING-- HUMAN?!?

MORE HUMAN THAN YOU!
NIGHTCRAWLER'S GENEROUS AND KIND AND DECENT! HE HAD EVERY REASON TO BE BITTER, EVERY EXCUSE TO BECOME AS MUCH OF A DEMON INSIDE AND OUT. BUT HE DECIDED HE'D RATHER LEARN TO LAUGH INSTEAD!
I HOPE I CAN BE HALF THE PERSON HE IS. AND IF I HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN CARING FOR MY FRIEND AND BELIEVING IN YOUR GOD...
... THEN I CHOOSE... M-MY FRIEND!
LET THOSE BLASPHEMOUS WORDS, GIRL...
...BE YOUR EPITAPH.
BLAM!

THAT COP-- *SHOT* THE REVEREND!
YUP-- WHO WAS ABOUT TO SHOOT AN UNARMED LITTLE GIRL. IF THAT'S THE WORD O' GOD, IT'S SURE CHANGED SOME SINCE SUNDAY SCHOOL.
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE MUTIES?!
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, THEY'RE FREE TO GO.
WHAT ABOUT 'EM? THEY'VE DONE AS MUCH--OR AS LITTLE-- AS YOU CLOWNS.
AN' GOOD LUCK TO 'EM.
THEY'LL NEED IT.

Epilogue:
A FEW DAYS LATER, AT XAVIER'S SCHOOL...
... WILLIAM STRYKER WAS ARRAIGNED TODAY ON CHARGES ARISING OUT OF THE RECENT ACTIVITIES OF A GROUP OF HIS SUPPORTERS WHO CALL THEMSELVES PURIFIERS. HE DENOUNCED THE INDICTMENT AS RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION AND PREDICTED THE EVENTUAL VINDICATION OF HIMSELF AND HIS CRUSADE.
A PHYRRIC VICTORY, X-MEN, WHOSE HOLLOWNESS...
...IS EVEN NOW BECOMING APPARENT.
THE MAN WAS BEATEN. HIS CAUSE LIVES ON. ALREADY, IT'S BEING SAID THAT STRYKER'S GOAL WAS RIGHT, ONLY HIS METHODS FLAWED. NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY, YOU CANNOT TRULY WIN.
I FEAR, OLD FRIEND...
...YOU ARE CORRECT.
I HAVE NEVER HEARD THAT TONE OF VOICE FROM YOU BEFORE, PROFESSOR.
ARE YOU TELLING US...
...WE SHOULD JOIN MAGNETO?
WHY NOT? I HAVE SPENT MY LIFE SMASHING MY HEAD AGAINST A WALL THAT REFUSES TO BE BROKEN. PERHAPS IT'S TIME I--WE--FOUND A BETTER WAY.
STRYKER MADE ME A KILLER. EVEN THOUGH NO ONE ACTUALLY DIED, THE INTENT WAS THERE!
I SWORE LONG AGO THAT I WOULD SEE NO MORE X-MEN DIE. IF MAGNETO'S IS THE ONLY MEANS TO THAT END...
...THEN SO BE IT.
I WON'T ACCEPT THAT, CHARLES.
GRANTED, TIMES ARE TOUGH FOR US AND THEY'LL PROBABLY GET A LOT WORSE. GRANTED, WE PROBABLY COULD CONQUER THE WORLD--THOUGH THE COST IN BLOOD WOULD BE STAGGERING.
BUT DON'T YOU SEE--EITHER OF YOU--WE'RE HUMAN, TOO! A DIFFERENT BRANCH, PERHAPS, BUT THE SAME BASIC TREE! SUCH A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN ATTITUDE CAN'T BE IMPOSED--TO HAVE ANY MEANING, IT MUST GROW FROM WITHIN.
YOU BROUGHT US TOGETHER TO FULFILL A DREAM, CHARLES--ONE BORN OUT OF HOPE AND THE NOBLEST OF HUMAN ASPIRATIONS--AND WE'VE SWEATED AND BLED, AND SOME OF US HAVE DIED, TO MAKE IT A REALITY. I'M NOT PREPARED TO GIVE UP.
THE MEANS ARE AS IMPORTANT AS THE END--WE HAVE TO DO THIS RIGHT OR NOT AT ALL. ANYTHING LESS NEGATES EVERY BELIEF WE'VE EVER HAD, EVERY SACRIFICE WE'VE EVER MADE.

YOU ARE ALL AGREED TO THIS ?
I SEE.
AND YOU, CHARLES, DO YOU SUBSCRIBE TO YOUR STUDENTS' INSANITY...
...OR WILL YOU JOIN ME ?
I...
...CANNOT.
AS YOU REMINDED ME, MAGNUS, I TAUGHT THEM. I GAVE THEM THEIR REASON FOR BEING. I CANNOT DESERT THEM.
IF THEY ARE WILLING TO GIVE MY DREAM A CHANCE, THEN SO AM I.
YOU ARE A FOOL!
YOU ARE ALL FOOLS!
MEBBE, BUT BY THE SAME TOKEN, CHUM...
...THE WORLD'S GOT NO SHORTAGE O' WINDMILLS T' TILT AT.
I HAVE WEPT OVER TOO MANY GRAVES, X-MEN...
...I WILL NOT DO SO OVER YOURS.
DON'T GO, MAGNETO! STAY WITH US. HELP US!
I CANNOT FIGHT FOR THAT WHICH I DO NOT BELIEVE, KITTY, MUCH AS I WOULD WISH IT OTHERWISE.
SCOTT MIGHT BE RIGHT, Y'KNOW. WE MIGHT WIN!
FOR ALL OUR SAKES-- MUTANT AND HUMAN-- I HOPE YOU DO. BUT SHOULD YOU FAIL...
...IT WILL BE MY TURN.


I FEEL SO... ASHAMED.
TO BE PROVEN ONLY HUMAN, AS FLAWED AND VULNERABLE AS THE REST OF US?
WHERE'S THE SHAME IN THAT?
WHERE INDEED?
I OWE YOU MORE THAN I CAN EVER REPAY.
IF EVER THERE WAS A MOMENT WHICH JUSTIFIED MY CREATION OF THE X-MEN, THIS IS IT.
OH-- THANK YOU, KURT.
PRECISELY WHAT I NEED.
WOULD YOU MIND SOME COMPANY, SCOTT?
NEVER SAY NO TO A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, ESPECIALLY WHEN SHE'S A FRIEND.
I HAVE NEVER BEEN MORE PROUD OF YOU. YOU SAID WHAT WAS IN OUR HEARTS, BOTH HERE AND AT THE GARDEN.
I THINK FOR A MOMENT YOU UNNERVED THE PROFESSOR-- YOU BECAME THE TEACHER AND HE, THE PUPIL.
LABELS AGAIN. THE HELL WITH 'EM.
HE WAS IN NEED. I HELPED HIM. AS HE WOULD ME.
THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT, REALLY.
NEEDING AND HELPING. CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER.
AND FROM THAT CARING COMES LOVE.
WHICH MAKES THE WORLD GO 'ROUND.
IF ONLY THAT WERE SO.
FIN